DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 465 002 UD 035 050

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TITLE Add It Up: Using Research To Improve Education for Low-Income and Minority Students.

INSTITUTION Poverty and Race Research Action Council, Washington, DC.

SPONS AGENCY Spencer Foundation, Chicago, IL.; George Gund Foundation, Cleveland, OH.; Fannie Mae Foundation, Washington, DC.; Joyce Foundation, Chicago, IL.; Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation, Cambridge, MA.

PUB DATE 2001-00-00

NOTE 71p.; Written in collaboration with Sandra Paik. Foreword by Judith Johnson. Also funded by Humanities Council of Washington, DC and the Akonadi Foundation.

AVAILABLE FROM Poverty & Race Research Action Council, 3000 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20008 ($5). Tel: 202-387-9887; Fax: 202-387-0764; e-mail: info@prrac.org.

PUB TYPE Guides - Non-Classroom (055)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.

DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Academic Standards; Accountability; Class Size; Cultural Pluralism; Diversity (Student); Early Childhood Education; Educational Change; Educational Environment; Elementary Secondary Education; *Equal Education; Evaluation Methods; Faculty Development; Grade Repetition; Language Minorities; Literacy Education; Low Achievement; *Low Income Groups; Mathematics Skills; *Minority Group Children; Parent Participation; Reading Skills; Student Evaluation; Teaching Skills; Thinking Skills

ABSTRACT

This guide explains how low-performing schools can become high-achieving ones, using information from studies of Title I schools. It presents practical ideas from these schools and communities as well as the research base behind their success. The nine chapters are (1) "Five Steps to a Good Start" (e.g., help parents understand how children's social and learning abilities develop); (2) "Four Steps for Setting the Course" (e.g., set academic success of all students as the school's mission); (3) "Five Ways To Serve Families and Thus Help Students Succeed" (e.g., use nontraditional forms of communication to reach out to parents); (4) "Five Ways To Assure Quality Teaching" (e.g., hold teachers responsible for student achievement); (5) "Four Essentials for Setting and Supporting High Standards" (e.g., create small learning environments); (6) "Six Ways to Tell If Your School Is Serious about Teaching Reading and Math" (e.g., emphasizing pre-reading skills in preschool and kindergarten); (7) "Five Steps to Using Assessment as an Effective Tool for Accountability" (e.g., use assessments to monitor the quality of instruction); (8) "Seven Steps To Assure Equity and Inclusion" (e.g., oppose both retention and social promotion); and (9) "Four Ways To Make Reforms Stick" (e.g., publicize progress). Tools, resources, and a glossary are appended. (SM)

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ADD IT UP:

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Written by Anne Lewis
in collaboration with Sandra Paik

Foreword by Judith Johnson

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Design by Brian Gallagher.

About the Poverty & Race Research Action Council (PRRAC):

PRRAC was founded in 1990 by committed advocates from the legal services and antipoverty communities who were seeking progressive solutions to address the ways our society creates and maintains a large stratum of the population that is both poor and subject to subordination by the dominant white majority.

As our name conveys, PRRAC deals not only with the intersections of race and poverty, but also with the intersection of research and advocacy. We seek to enhance collaboration between those whose research is relevant to the fight against racism and poverty and those activists who use the tools of litigation, community organizing, public education, and legislation in that fight. We hope to encourage and facilitate more, better, and relevant social science research useful to activists, and to persuade activists to shape their work in light of what relevant research can impart regarding problems and solutions.

PRRAC publishes a bimonthly newsletter/journal, *Poverty & Race* — usually 20-28 pages, containing articles and symposia on cutting-edge topics, reports on PRRAC's work, and a rich Resources Section, listing usually 100-150 recent reports, studies, conferences, etc. (as well as job opportunities) related to our concerns. These are organized by categories (Race/Racism, Poverty/Welfare, Community Organizing, Criminal Justice, Economic/Community Development, Education, Employment/Jobs Policy, Environment, Families/Children/Women,Food/Nutrition/Hunger, Health, Homelessness, Housing, Immigration). A complete, user-friendly listing of the nearly 7,000 such resources we have catalogued since publication began in 1992 will be available on our website (www.prrac.org) in 2002. Subscriptions to *Poverty & Race* are $25/yr., $45/two yrs. We'll be happy to send you a sample copy upon request.

The leading articles and symposia from *Poverty & Race* have been published in two volumes:

Double Exposure Poverty and Race in America: (M.E. Sharpe, 1997, 258 pp.), ed. Chester Hartman, Foreword by Bill Bradley, Preface by Julian Bond.

Challenges to Equality: Poverty and Race in America (M.E. Sharpe, 2001, 396 pp.), ed. Chester Hartman, Foreword by Congressman John Lewis.

These volumes, both appropriate for classroom use (secondary and well as post-secondary education classes), treat, in symposium form, such topics as "Is Racism Permanent?," "Racial/Ethnic Categories," "The Underclass," "Affirmative Action," "Reparations," "Is Integration Possible?," "Democratic Participation," "Environmental Justice," "President Clinton's Race Initiative" and a range of education issues: the standards movement, racial vs. socioeconomic school integration, etc. Contributors to these books include the leading thinkers and activists on such issues: Henry Hampton, Maxine Waters, Herbert Gans, Marian Wright Edelman, Manning Marable, Douglas Massey, Salim Muwakkil, Kati Haycock, Bebe Moore Campbell, Paul Ong, john powell, Roger Wilkins, Raúl Yazguirre, Richard Kahlenberg, Jonathan Kozol, James Loewen, Cynthia McKinney, Frances Fox Piven, Hugh Price, Frank Wu, Howard Zinn — and many others.

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The full Table of Contents for both books is available on our website or from our office. *Double Exposure* is $27.95, *Challenges to Equality* is $26.95; shipping/handling is $3.50 (+ $1.50 each additional book). Contact PRRAC for quantity discounts.

Among PRRAC's many activities is funding social science research on the intersections of race and poverty that is designed to support a planned advocacy agenda. What we have found over the years is that such research, even if carried out by not disinterested parties, can provide credible, compelling evidence that legislators, the courts, the media, and the general public must take seriously. We also have found that relatively small grants (our maximum grant is $10,000, our average grant $7,500) can yield first-rate products when the recipients/doers are those who want and need the results for their advocacy work. A complete list of the nearly 100 PRRAC-funded projects to date and their products is available on request, and is posted on our website: www.prrac.org.

Add It Up is the extension of a conference, "Effective Education for Low-Income Minority Students," originally held at Howard University Law School. A second recent conference (also held at Howard University Law School) — "High Student Mobility/Classroom Turnover: How to Address It? How to Reduce It?" — will also result in a handbook. In cooperation with NECA (the Network of Educators on the Americas), we also plan to produce a curriculum titled, "Putting the 'Movement' Back Into Civil Rights Teaching." Please contact us for availability information.

PRRAC's education work is funded by the Spencer Foundation, the George Gund Foundation, the Fannie Mae Foundation, the Joyce Foundation, the Humanities Council of Washington, DC, the Akonadi Foundation, and the Caroline and Sigmund Schott Foundation. We are grateful to all for their support. ♦

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Acknowledgments

Alejandra Lopez-Fernandini, PRRAC's 2000-2001 Mickey Leland/Bill Emerson Hunger Fellow, and the staff of Collaborative Communications assisted greatly in this project. And we are grateful to the following for reviewing earlier drafts: Rosemary Fennell of the U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights, Sue Ferguson of the National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education; Matthew Hornbeck; Julia Lara of the Council of Chief State School Officers; Page McCullough of the Rural School and Community Trust; and Ruth Mitchell of The Education Trust.

Foreword: Taking Stock

Judith Johnson

While there are several opinions as to the beginning of the Standards movement, the notion of embedding in federal legislation the belief that all children must be educated to high standards represented an historic sea change in federal policy. What is now viewed as a revolution continues to unfold in very uneven ways across our country. The federal government used the powerful arm of legislation and funding to mandate a major shift in the belief system about the education expectations for poor and minority children. Since the 1994 reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Act, public schools have been at the work of raising expectations for the performance of historically underserved children. We could not have known then how deep the resistance might be or how unprepared our schools were to make good on the promise to educate all children, especially poor and minority children, to high standards.

I suggest that this movement began with the 1954 Supreme Court decision declaring segregated schools unconstitutional and inherently unequal. In retrospect, however, that decision did not resolve the issue of equity and equal access to quality. It focused on dismantling a centuries-old value that assumed children of color need not be educated to the standards that defined a sound and basic education in schools educating white children. No one publicly entertained the fact that desegregating our schools would not in itself improve the academic achievement for all students.

The irony, 47 years later, is that we face the resegregation of our schools across the country and a continuing failure to ensure that all children receive equitable access to a quality education.

While the lawyers return to the courtrooms to complete the unfinished work of the Civil Rights Movement, educators face the formidable task of teaching the children who, in increasing numbers, sit in segregated classrooms each day. For these students, each year is the only year of each grade, and the days lost to inadequate instruction are lost forever. The challenge is to tackle the quality of education provided for our most needy children at the core, in the buildings and classrooms they enter each day. We have indisputable evidence that when students of all races enter the same classroom and are taught to the same standards, children of color meet or exceed academic standards in numbers far greater than do their peers attending segregated schools.

But placing students from many cultures and ethnicities into the same classroom represents an incomplete solution. The events since 1994 are both promising and troubling. In too many places in this country, we have translated the belief system about all children into rhetoric that is an ill fit for the very children who were meant to benefit from it. In too many school systems across the country, we declare the vision to be morally correct and then fail to provide the resources essential to translating the belief into practice.

We could not have predicted the backlash and the unpreparedness of public schools to implement the mandate. What is amazing is the determination that propels everyone who has chosen to take a stand on one side or another of the big issue, which poses the question: What is it we want our students to know and be able to do? Equally important: Is the answer to be same for all children? The growing cultural and linguistic diversity defining the demographic profile in an increasing number of states is almost always accompanied by assertions of failing schools and low-achieving students. The real story is told not in statistics that document achievement gaps discernible by socio-economic and ethnic identities; it is told in the faces of our children who enter our schools each day full of promise. The differential achievement of poor and ethnically diverse students is well documented and spans all the grades, from entering kindergartners to high school seniors. Educators and the educational systems that house them will have to respond to the unique needs of these students more effectively than in the past. It is this challenge that is represented in the standards-based reform era. Innovative solutions are needed, and quickly. We have

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come to understand and even accept the fact that complex issues require complex solutions, and we do not have the luxury of trying on one new "shoe" at a time. Gigantic shifts in the culture of public schools are essential if we are to successfully educate all students to achieve success.

What would it take to construct a public education system that educated all students to high standards?

In the wake of so many distortions about what public education should accomplish, it seems both timely and appropriate to remind Americans that the move to adopt and implement academic standards for what students should know and be able to do remains the most important force in improving education in our country. This is a movement that began with a mission, to dismantle the system of inferior education that graduated too many students ill-prepared to assume a productive, contributing adult life. Students who lack the skills and knowledge essential to living out lives in continuously morphing political and economic environments are more likely to withdraw, and we lose the benefits of their talents and abilities. Perhaps just as important, they become casual observers of democracy in action, not active participants. There is no other way to characterize this failure to educate all students to the same high standards than to view it as a national tragedy.

Until *A Nation At Risk* was published in 1983, we generally accepted the notion of a two-tiered educational system that represented two standards: Rigor and challenge for children who by accident of birth were born into well-educated families, and a less rigorous system with lower expectations for everyone else. It was, as a principal once said to me, our nation's way of ensuring that someone was available and content to "pump gas" for others.

We face a national dilemma: we cannot afford to lose another generation of children to unenforced and mediocre standards. We must provide educators with the skills, knowledge and resources essential to construct classrooms that educate all students to high standards. And for our students, this is not about access, it is about performance. It is not enough to be able to complete mathematical computations. In this world, math literacy means understanding meaning and purpose. It means the ability to solve problems and to think critically. I am reminded of the "hazmat" signs that dominate our highways: vehicles transporting dangerous materials must exit to ensure the safety of unsuspecting travelers. If we accept only the notion of access to equity and do not require that students actually achieve to high standards, we subject them to the hazmat of inferior education and suspend the incomplete journey of the Civil Rights Movement.

This time, we must hold everyone in the enterprise accountable for student success. Our challenge is to remain vigilant and to do so by continuously collecting and interpreting the information available on student achievement. Only if we have access to data can we identify the practices that enhance chances for success and those that impede or close the door to success. In addition, we need only the most qualified teachers in the classrooms, and we need the availability of the best instructional tools that are taken for granted in high-wealth districts.

It is important for Americans to understand that our national reflections on the senseless loss of life accompanying the September 2001 attacks on key national symbols require that part of the clean-up include a rededication to public education. Today's students are our youngest citizens of a global community. We must prepare them to understand, respect and contribute to peace, and that can only happen if we produce well-educated, culturally-sensitive adults. Our schools cannot afford to let one child slip through unprepared to pursue a productive life. We know what we need to do. We need to speed up the process of moving from rhetoric to action. We set the bar higher than ever for all students. Now let's work to ensure they all clear it. ◆

Add It Up: An Overview

If a school in a poor community in San Antonio, Chicago, or Atlanta can bring almost all of its students to high levels of academic success, then why not the school in my community? Perhaps, the answer to "why not" is that many of us assumed that this level of achievement could not be attained or at least could not be attained at "my school." Perhaps the answer is that many simply did not know where to begin, what to do, or how to proceed to move from current levels of performance to a much higher level of academic expectation.

Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools.

This is a place to begin.

Parents, teachers, and officials of low-performing schools and districts know they must find ways for their students to succeed academically. State and district accountability systems demand that they do. Beyond policy mandates, however, there is a moral mandate. A good education, one that overcomes the burdens on children of racial discrimination and poverty, is the hope of every parent in schools where too many children are failing. Moreover, helping every child become a successful learner is the most basic reason why people choose to be educators.

Nonetheless, the obstacles are great. Through habits of neglect, lack of information, apathy and often discrimination, children of color and/or poverty are being left behind in schools throughout the country:

- Children in high-poverty schools are much more likely to be taught by uncertified teachers than children in high-wealth schools (in Baltimore, for example, 35% of the teachers in the lowest-performing — and highest poverty — schools were uncertified, according to *The Baltimore Sun*, February 28, 2001).

- The proportion of well-qualified teachers in a school, those with state certification and a major in the subject they teach, is the most important factor in student achievement; yet teachers in high-poverty schools are much more likely to be teaching out of field — that is, they do not have a major or minor in the subjects they are assigned to teach — than teachers in low-poverty schools.

- Students of color and low-income students are more likely to be assigned to low-track or remedial classes, to be retained in grade, and to be denied high school diplomas than are other students.

- Black students are three times as likely as white students to be labeled mentally retarded or emotionally disturbed and put in special education classes; disparate placements occur even in schools where both black and white students have high-income parents.

- Black students represent 17% of public school enrollment, but 33% of out-of-school suspensions. In Milwaukee, black students account for 61% of the enrollment, but 80% of the suspensions.

- Children in schools designated as low-performing under federal guidelines frequently experience no improvements in their education; according to a U.S. Department of Education study, less than half of the principals of Title I schools in need of improvement reported receiving additional help, and one-fourth of them reported doing nothing to address their students' low performance.

- Forty-two of 49 states surveyed by The Education Trust had state and local funding gaps between the school districts serving areas with the highest child poverty rates (highest quartile) and the districts serving those with the lowest rates (lowest quartile). At the extreme, if funding were equal across schools in New York State, a 400-student elementary school at the bottom end of the funding gap would receive $1.1 million more per year.

These are very real issues for parents and educators in low-income and/or minority communities. They result from discriminatory policies and practices that have become ingrained in the education system

and must be rooted out. State and district inequities and misinformed (at best) practices need to be addressed, but those wanting quality in their local schools do not have to wait for changes from above. They have powerful weapons of their own: data, research-based practices and plenty of examples of schools that accept no excuses to avoid doing what it takes to become excellent. If others adopt these proven successful practices, then we will have the critical mass necessary to ensure that all children get the quality education they deserve.

This guide explains how low-performing schools can become high-achieving ones. There are no secrets among the many schools doing it. The current standards reform movement seeks equity at the classroom level. It contends that all students can learn at much higher levels, no matter where they go to school, and sets the academic bar higher for everyone. Unlike other efforts, this one requires teachers and administrators of low-performing students to make substantial changes in what and how they teach. None of the schools that have been successful with minority and/or low-income children could have made progress without accepting change and continuous improvement as givens in their daily efforts. How did they do it and what can be adopted by any school? The following pages present lessons learned from these schools and communities and the research base behind their success. For the most part, the research comes from studies of Title I schools, especially elementary schools. Our guide organizes the information around clear, definitive issues — from early childhood education to what to expect from district leadership.

The lessons from the research are clearly meant for everyone responsible for educating a child. Many statements about school reform deliver separate messages for people involved in the education enterprise–students, parents, teachers, administrators, school boards, state policymakers, and communities. We believe academic success for children who often feel the sting of low expectations and inadequate resources depends on everyone knowing what can be accomplished and how. Together, their efforts can add up. ◆

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5 Steps to A Good Start Chapter 1

- Help parents understand how children's social and learning abilities develop.
- Provide high-quality preschool experiences, including well-paid and well-prepared staff, for all children whose parents want them.
- Increase the emphasis on cognitive skills, especially the development of early literacy, in preschool programs such as Head Start, while maintaining the programs' strengths in parent involvement.
- Make sure the transitions from preschool to kindergarten and/or first grade are seamless and smooth for everyone–children, parents, and teachers.
- Gather, analyze, and report disaggregated data on evaluations of children's school readiness, checking for bias that could prematurely label children.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Children are capable of "astonishing" intellectual growth in their first eight years of life, primarily because they watch what their parents do. Almost anything family members can do together becomes a learning experience for young children. Reading a book to a child can foster interest in reading if the parent asks questions that help a child remember and expand on the story or the information. Discussing the Educational Testing Service report, *America's Smallest School*, research scientist Irving Sigel indicated that conversations with children ought to be at their comfort level but require them to think in abstract terms. "How many apples are on the table?" only asks a child to describe what is obvious. But asking the child to describe his/her trip to the store or a farm demands more thinking.

Parenting classes tend to exhort families, especially mothers, to use strategies that improve the cognitive growth of their children. Indeed, research in this country and others consistently indicates that mothers' education level is a strong predictor of their children's academic achievement. Instead of focusing on parenting per se, however, the Intergenerational Literacy Action Research Project reported in *Teach the Mother and Reach the Child* that when mothers improve their own literacy skills as a means of bettering themselves–to gain computer skills or other job training, to build their self-confidence, or to prepare for a GED or further education–the literacy activities they do with their children in the home increase.

Children enrolled in good day care and preschool programs enter kindergarten better prepared to learn. David Grissmer's analysis of results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress, published by the RAND Corporation in July 2000, attributed higher levels of participation in public pre-kindergarten programs as one of the major factors in a state's higher scores on math assessments given in the fourth and eighth grades. One tool is the set of standards in the accreditation criteria for early childhood education programs developed by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). These set child/adult ratios for different ages, space requirements, professional training requirements, and other quality criteria.

Improving preschool experiences is a challenge to whole communities, not just to caregivers. In *Starting Points*, the Carnegie Corporation Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Our Youngest Children identified several factors that threaten the well-being of children in child care. Child care often lacks quality, is too expensive for poor families, experiences high turnover among providers because of inadequate compensation and working conditions, has weak consumer protection, and has a fragmented system of delivery. Not surprisingly, communities that have insisted on higher-quality preschool programs pay providers more, invest in their professional development, and experience less staff turnover. In Minnesota, statewide open forums attended by more than 1,000 people developed a legislative agenda for preschool programs that resulted in more than 300 high-quality programs in school districts. According to the National Policy Forum's *Sticking Together* and the Carnegie Task Force on Meeting the Needs of Young Children, the programs are open to families with children from birth to kindergarten and provide learning experiences for children and parents alike.

Christopher Jencks and Meredith Phillips found that vocabulary tests given to 3- and 4-year-olds show that the typical black child score falls below the twentieth percentile. Research shows that this gap continues to grow. The first report from Early Childhood Longitudinal Study conducted by the National Center for Education Statistics, *America's Kindergartners*, shows that minority children enter kindergarten with a skills gap that widens, on more

A GOOD START LEADS TO A BETTER LIFE

Child-Parent Centers in Chicago, funded by Title I, provide up to six years of intervention services for children ages 3-9. Like the federal Even Start programs, the centers offer early childhood education, focused on language and reading; and require parents to be involved in learning activities. Children who attended the centers had significantly higher reading and math scores than nonparticipants at the end of third grade. The differences were still present at the eighth grade. By age 20, participants were more likely than nonparticipants to have completed high school. They also were less likely to enter the juvenile justice system, receive special education services or be retained in grade throughout their academic career. There was a 51% reduction in child maltreatment in the families, based on data from a comparison group. Because of the better outcomes, the program provided more than $6 in benefits for every $1 invested.

Source: *Success in Early Intervention: The Chicago Child-Parent Centers.*

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sophisticated skills, during the kindergarten year. The study also shows that teachers are more likely to label black children (especially boys) as having behavior problems and to be more critical of the parenting skills of minority families.

Some early childhood programs, for example Head Start, have focused on the health and social development of the young children they serve, as well as building strong ties with families. Head Start is the most important preschool program for black children. Without losing its critical components, Head Start should incorporate greater attention to building cognitive skills, especially early literacy and numeracy. All early education providers — Head Start, other nursery programs, and kindergarten teachers — need to be familiar with the research on young children's emotional and social development as well as their cognitive development.

The increase in knowledge about young children's development is awesome. Moving that knowledge into practice, however, requires focus and resources, especially in the professional development for early childhood personnel. According to *From Neurons to Neighborhoods*, the National Research Council's two-year study of child development, resources focused on literacy and numeracy skills need to be balanced with resources that lead to strategies that develop curiosity, self-direction, and persistence in learning situations; the ability to cooperate, demonstrate caring, and resolve conflict with peers; and the capacity to be motivated by feelings of competence and of being loved.

CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Accreditation Readiness Survey. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's survey tool helps early care and education providers familiarize themselves with accreditation criteria and identify areas that need strengthening for developing a program improvement plan. Available at www.naeyc.org/accreditation/support.htm.

Building Your Baby's Brain: A Parent's Guide to the First Five Years. This Teaching Strategies guide, listed on the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education website, explains some of the findings from brain research and strategies to support development. Available in English and Spanish at www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/publications.html.

Child Care Checklist for Parents. This resource from Child Care That Works of Iowa State University Extension helps identify information parents might need when looking for child care. Available from the National Network for Child Care website at www.nncc.org/Choose.Quality.Care/qual.care.page.html.

Developmental Milestones: How I Grow In Your Care. ZERO TO THREE designed three charts for parents and caregivers outlining children's learning processes during their earliest years of life. Available at www.zerotothree.org/parent.html?Load=NAS-report.html.

Ear Infections and Language Development. This booklet from the National Center for Early Development & Learning provides information regarding ear infections and middle ear fluid. It explains how hearing and language learning may be affected byear infections and how you can support children's language learning. Available at www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PAGES/prdcts.htm.

Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten: Linking Children, Families, & Schools. This manual describes a school-based approach to enhancing connections during the transition to kindergarten. It presents a framework, key principles, strategies and practices for developing a community transition plan. Available at www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PAGES/prdcts.htm.

A Parent's Guide to Accessing Programs for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers with Disabilities. The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities developed this parent's guide for families who are seeking help for their young children with special needs. It provides information regarding early intervention services for children ages birth through 2 years old and special education and related services for children ages 3 through 5 years old. Available at www.nichcy.org/pubs/parent/pa2.htm.

Before they enter kindergarten, many young children already have made a transition or several — from homecare to child care provider to Head Start or some other kind of nursery school. Often these different programs do not connect in any way. In *Transitions to Kindergarten*, the National Transition Study sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education reported that only 10% of schools reported systematic communication between kindergarten teachers and all previous caregivers or teachers, only 12% had curricula designed to build on the preschool program. Because Head Start programs often are located in school buildings, transition programs for low-income children are more frequent than for other children. High-poverty schools, however, report less positive attitudes by educators toward kindergarten children and their parents than do moderate- or low-poverty schools.

Schools that really try to have good transitions from preschool to kindergarten and primary grades tend to: have administrators who give support and leadership to transition activities and who appoint staff to be responsible for transition practices; foster an environment of communication among teachers which extends to preschool staff; locate preschools within the school building; and use programs directed at high-poverty children and families to ease transitions. ❖

IS YOUR SCHOOL READY?

The National Education Goals Panel asks these questions about transition efforts:

- Have the kindergarten staff had opportunities to visit neighborhood preschools and child care centers to discuss their philosophy, pedagogy, and expectations for children and families?
- Are there formal transition activities planned with the neighborhood preschools, child care centers, and Head Start programs?
- Have ongoing mechanisms and professional development opportunities been established to link the school to preschool programs?
- Is the school staff involved in early childhood professional organizations or associations?

Source: Ready Schools: A Report of the Goal 1 Ready Schools Resource Group.

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4 Steps for Setting the Course
Chapter 2

- Set academic success of all students as the school's mission.
- Support leaders for a school who have a clear vision of and commitment to student academic achievement and support.
- Include everyone — teachers, parents, and students — in setting and carrying out the mission.
- Organize all efforts around student progress, including gathering and analyzing data, professional development, and outreach to parents and the community.

There exists, in successful schools, a strong culture and clear sense of purpose that defines the general thrust and nature of life for their inhabitants. At the same time, a great deal of freedom is given to teachers and others as to how these essential core values are to be honored and realized. This combination of tight structure–around clear and explicit themes representing the core of the school's culture — and of autonomy — so that people can pursue these themes in ways that make sense to them — may well be a key reason why these schools are so successful.

"Leadership and Excellence in Schooling," *Educational Leadership*, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Goals and a professional community appear frequently as important indicators of school quality, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The research indicates that quality schools generally have a stable, professional community of experienced teachers who share norms, values, goals, and a common focus on student learning. The school culture fosters among staff a willingness to collaborate and an openness to reflection and new ideas directed toward supporting high student achievement. The findings suggest "that teachers working together as a community of adults with individual and joint commitments to a set of common goals within the broader context of the school can have a powerful effect beyond their individual contributions.

A Dana Center study for the U.S. Department of Education found that nine high-poverty, high-achieving elementary schools shared a common factor — strong school leadership. The principals "identified and pursued an important, visible, yet attainable first goal." They focused on attaining this goal, and then used their success to move toward more ambitious ones. They also "redirected time and energy that was being spent on conflicts between adults in the school toward service to children." These leaders appealed to teachers, support staff, and parents "to put aside their own interests and focus on serving children well."

The literature on "turn-around" schools universally endorses a mission for each school, one designed and implemented by everyone connected with the school. Developing a mission statement on paper is not enough, according to another Dana Center study, this one focusing on successful schoolwide programs in Texas. The schools in this study "had the mission of ensuring the academic success of every student. They did not merely have mission statements. Their sense of mission was articulated in every aspect of their planning, organization, and use of resources." This focus on academic success influenced the selection of instructional materials or strategies; use of fiscal resources; scheduling the school calendar; assignment and use of teachers, support personnel, and volunteers; and use of classroom, playground, and building space.

The 26 elementary schools in the Dana Center study were implementing a variety of schoolwide Title I programs, with 70% of the students passing the reading and math sections of the Texas

SUPPORTS FOR PRINCIPALS

Several strategies help to build the capacity of principals, such as:

- Providing opportunities for principals to visit and learn from other schools with similar demographics that achieved higher levels of success.
- Assisting principals in accessing, understanding, and using achievement data to guide decision-making processes.
- Ensuring that principals have adequate time to engage in instructional support efforts on a daily basis.
- Giving principals easy and regular access to central office personnel who can help principals overcome barriers or respond constructively to problems.
- Giving principals time for their own professional development around promising instructional practices.
- Mentoring principals through processes for identifying, supporting, and, if necessary, firing personnel performing below expectations.

Source: Hope for Urban Education: A Study of Nine High-Performing, High-Poverty Urban Elementary Schools.

Assessment of Academic Skills (1995). Each school chose its instructional approach based on what would be effective with its students, after formal and informal collection of information about the approach. In addition to a mission centered on academic achievement, these successful schools had six other common themes:

- **No excuses**. "Educators at these schools tended to believe that they could succeed with any student, regardless of the nature of the home situation, the student's previous performance or diagnosis, resource difficulties, and whatever other constraints might confront the school.... In almost all of the 26 schools, teachers talked about students who lived in difficult situations (often related to their families' low income). However, the teachers never accepted that the difficult situation was a reason to lower their academic expectations for students. Instead, the teachers often engaged in creative efforts to respond to the situation. Whether it meant having the student do his homework after school each day, calling home to provide a wake-up call on mornings when the mother worked the night shift, allowing a student to take extra portions of lunch home in the afternoon so that she would have dinner, or modeling to a mother how to read a story to her preschool child, the school personnel evidenced a powerful 'whatever it takes' attitude." The schools also used creative means (grants, partnerships) to get the resources they needed. They negotiated to modify onerous regulations and created such a will to succeed with their students that the teachers "defined their jobs based on what needed to be done" and not on "traditional notions of work days or work weeks."

- **The schools experimented carefully with new ways to improve teaching and learning**. "If an approach was not working with one student or any group of students, teachers were allowed, encouraged, and even expected to try different approaches." Experiments were chosen carefully, and if they did not work, the focus was on what lessons were learned, not on reprisals. Experimentation took place at many levels — pilot tests of materials or strategies before adoption by the whole school, the organization of the school day, the use of technology, use of intercessions, and the assignment of support staff.

- **Everyone is part of the solution**. In these successful Title I schools, job titles did not matter as much as one's potential to contribute. The study says: "Teachers at all grade levels in both regular and special programs, professional support personnel such as nurses and counselors, bus drivers, campus administrators, custodians, school office staff, cafeteria workers, instructional aides, librarians, parent volunteers, part-time personnel, community leaders, and students were often enlisted to be a part of the team that would lead a student to success at school." Open-door policies and open-door attitudes were common. Also, students had important roles in directing their learning experiences and in making decisions about their learning. Cooperative learning and peer tutoring were used extensively.

- **Sense of family**. Not only were students, parents and all school personnel part of the team, they also were part of a school family. Respect for all students was obvious, as well as concern for the child's total development, including aesthetic experiences and social needs. Discipline measures, used rarely, were fair, consistent, quick, and demonstrated respect for the student. When appropriate, school personnel sacrificed rules for the good of the child. Parents often had their own place at the school and were greeted by name. Special efforts made language-minority parents feel welcome. Principals found ways to value the strengths of all staff members. All of these behaviors created "a powerful sense of belonging" among everyone involved with the school.

- **Collaboration and trust**. Teamwork and a sense of family created situations in which school personnel worked and learned together. In the schools studied, "openness, honesty, and trust characterized most of the interactions among school personnel.... [They] openly shared concerns and successes with each other. They provided assistance to each other and learned from each other." Yet people also felt free to disagree without fear of reprisal. Teachers coordinate and cooperate with others teaching at the same grade level as well as other grade levels, even if the grade was in another building, in order to improve their understanding of each other's curricula and expectations.

- **Passion for ongoing learning and growing.** Although the schools took time to celebrate their successes, "there was almost an immediate redefinition of higher goals." Planning for improvement was continuous, as were professional development opportunities that were freely shared (journal articles, visits to effective schools, attendance at conferences, data analysis). Teachers and parents were as much a part of a learning community as were students. ❖

CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices – A Guide for Schools and Districts. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory developed this tool to help schools examine themselves and prepare for schoolwide reform through a set of self-assessment measures. Available at www.ncrel.org/csri/progtool.htm.

An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform. This guide provides a review of the research on 24 schoolwide reform models. For each approach reviewed, the guide provides ratings accompanied by profiles and research references. This work was conducted by the American Institutes for Research (www.air.org) and was contracted by the American Association of School Administrators (www.aasa.org), American Federation of Teachers (www.aft.org), National Association of Elementary School Principals (www.naesp.org), National Association of Secondary School Principals (www.nassp.org), and National Education Association (www.nea.org). Available at www.aasa.org/Reform/index.htm.

Holding Schools Accountable Toolkit: A Guide for People Working in Neighborhoods. Developed by Public Impact under a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this toolkit provides guidance in organizing stakeholders, gathering information, developing action plans, and evaluating progress. Available at www.publicimpact.com/hsat.

Leadership Audit Tool: A Participatory Management Checklist. This web-based tool, located on the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory website, focuses on using participatory management to foster staff buy-in and commitment and helps school leaders identify skills and techniques they would like to improve. The tool will graph your responses to a questionnaire about leadership areas. Available at www.ncrel.org/cscd/proflead.htm.

A Toolkit Using Data for Decision-Making to Improve Schools: Raise Student Achievement by Incorporating Data Analysis in School Planning. The New England Comprehensive Assistance Center developed this guidebook for collecting, understanding, and using data to improve school programs designed to raise student achievement. The toolkit provides resources that help create and revise school action plans, from assembling baseline data to monitoring ongoing progress. Available at www.edc.org/NECAC/resources/pubs/toolkit.html.

Tools for Schools: School Reform Models Supported by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students. The National Institute is a part of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. This guide describes 27 school reform models, providing information about comprehensive school reform models, classroom and curriculum redesign models, and professional development reform models. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/ToolsforSchools/index.html.

What It Takes: 10 Capacities for Initiating and Sustaining School Improvement. From the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory, also known as the LAB at Brown University, this guidebook is designed to help schools reflect upon their organizational capacities for developing and maintaining successful reforms. Available at www.lab.brown.edu/public/pubs/pub_index.shtml.

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5 Ways to Serve Families and Thus Help Students Succeed

Chapter 3

- Understand and implement parent involvement requirements under Title I and other federal programs.
- Create a partnership-based school environment that considers parents and the community as part of the family.
- Cultivate an ethos within the school of respecting and cultivating family cultural values and traditions.
- Use non-traditional forms of communication to reach out to parents.
- Make student and family community-based services available at the school site.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Parent involvement is not an option in high-poverty schools: it is a requirement of various federal programs — for good reason. Two reviews of the research on parent involvement, *A New Generation of Evidence* and *The Schools We Need Now*, decisively link home support to the goals of the school with student achievement. When families and schools cooperate, the results include: higher grades and test scores, better attendance and more homework done, fewer placements in special education, more positive attitudes and behavior, higher graduation rates, and greater enrollment in post-secondary education.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act recognizes that families are an asset to student achievement and help students become engaged in their schooling. However, low-income parents are often reluctant to be involved in their children's schools for various reasons including: language and/or cultural barriers, personal experiences that discourage them from having contacts, and discriminatory practices by the school. To ensure such barriers are broken down, Title I requires parents to be involved in planning and reviewing the Title I school improvement plan with teachers and others; parents must approve the process for their involvement in the planning and review; schools must provide parents with comprehensive information on Title I, the school's performance, and their children's progress; and schools must provide training for parents on school decisions related to the school improvement plan. Parent involvement is also required for students with disabilities and students in vocational education programs.

The research also shows that parent involvement is a complex activity, especially among low-income families. According to another synthesis of research by Kathleen Hoover-Dempsey and Howard Sandler, three factors influence the decisions parents make about their connections to the schools. The first is their belief about what is important, necessary, and permissible for parents to do. Working-class and low-income parents see a limited role for themselves, while upper middle-class families believe they are central to making connections. The second factor is the parents' sense of "efficacy." If they believe they can help their children academically — even when their own education level is not high — they will be more active at the school. The third factor is how parents perceive the invitations to participate. Parents are sensitive to negative signals, say the researchers, and are wary of contrived opportunities. Schools that want more parent participation should be sincere about it and offer multiple opportunities for parents to participate and to be informed.

Urgent Message, a report on low-income parents' involvement in school reform describes two scenarios for schools that claim they welcome parent participation. One is the traditional "fortress school," where principals and teachers make all the decisions, communication is one-way, and efforts at complying with Title I and other federal mandates are minimal at best. The other scenario recognizes the advantages of fostering full parent involvement, such as:

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

Few parents volunteered at Burgess Elementary School in Atlanta, GA, nor did very many attend infrequent PTA meetings. Teachers were demoralized because student achievement was low — only 29% of the students were performing at or above the norm on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills in reading; only 34% in math. The high poverty rate — 81% — was seen as a barrier.

The teachers decided to make parents their partners in trying to improve students' achievement. They attended workshops on how to work with parent volunteers. They established a Saturday School for students, with a parallel program for parents. The parents improved their academic skills and learned about the school curriculum. They began to help their children with homework because of the confidence they gained at the Saturday School. Because this program was so successful, the school then offered computer classes for parents and enlisted them as organizers for the annual Science and Social Science Fair.

Today, 10 to 15 parents typically are in the school each day as volunteers, and PTA meetings often attract 100 parents. In 1998, 64% of the students performed above the national average in reading on the ITBS, and 72% scored above average on the math test.

Source: School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools, First Annual Report, January 2001.

- **Clear vision of school change**. Families, staff, community, and students all participate in developing a child-centered vision for the school; high standards are set for all children and carried out in all classrooms; and all children have ample opportunities to learn to the high standards.

- **Trusting relationships among families, staff and students**. School staff tour the neighborhoods, learn about their families' cultures; the school "maps" the community to identify local groups and institutions and works with them as partners; social events for families and staff are held often and at convenient times; the school structure allows for constant conversation about student progress and the educational program; the school is open year-round, has a family resource center, and hosts community events.

- **Information and tools for full participation**. The school fully shares data on student progress with parents and the community and continually uses data to improve academics achievement; staff development sessions are open to families; families learn how the school system works, take leadership training, and build advocacy skills; a family center at the school offers adult education, literacy and job training, and referrals to social services; and there are regular conversations with parents about concerns and issues.

- **Meaningful participation in all aspects of the school**. Parents develop agendas for what they want to do, are recognized as experts about their children; family cultures are included and honored in the curriculum and teaching materials; the school provides services and activities that celebrate families and are culturally appropriate; and families monitor their children's progress, advocate for their fair treatment, and take part in all major decisions about the school.

- **Supportive policy**. Family involvement is a part of the school's written policy; the policy is developed with and approved by parents; the policy spells out how parents will be partners, what training the school will offer, and how funds for parent involvement will be spent; and resources are available for transportation, child care, space to meet, and access to telephones/materials.

In low-income communities, local, state, federal, and foundation funding often are used separately or in combinations to create what has become known as "full-service schools." State-funded family service centers in Kentucky, for example, offer a range of supports for children and their families. The Beacons in New York City are after-school, comprehensive centers offering a full range of services and activities for students and others in the community. The federal 21st Century Schools program provides considerable funding (more than $800 million in fiscal 2001) for after-school and other extended-learning time for students and for programs that combine academic work with recreation and youth development programs.

According to Joy Dryfoos, school health clinics are being utilized most by the highest-risk students. Many of the school health clinic users have no other source of routine medical care and no health insurance. Use of emergency rooms has declined in areas with school clinics. Also, because minor illnesses can be treated in school, absences and excuses to go home have decreased. Students using the clinics have lower substance use, better school attendance, and lower dropout rates. ◆

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NO BORDERS IN EL PASO

Whether it is drawing parents into sharing the school's goals, encouraging them to be active in school reform, or creating community links, a school functions within a community and cultural context. When the relationship is truly a partnership, as in El Paso, the community is strengthened and standard measures of student progress show great improvement. In this border city, where two-thirds of the students are low-income and most are English language learners, the gap between minority and white students on the Texas assessments has almost closed.

Now almost 10 years old, the El Paso Collaborative for Academic Excellence chose "comprehensive community involvement" rather than comprehensive school reform, according to the Collaborative's director, Susana Navarro. Organized as a K-16 compact to provide a smooth transition for students through college, the Collaborative leaders, drawn from all sectors of the community, developed eight initiatives:

1. **Reforms are standards-based**. Teachers, parents, higher education and business leaders, as well as national consultants, drew up the standards, based on recommendations of state and national groups. Moreover, teachers and parents talked through every standard together.

2. **Assessments are aligned with standards**. The Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) is only one measure used by the three school districts in the Collaborative; they supplement it with other assessments more closely matching the standards.

3. **The reforms apply to all students, teachers and schools**. Leaders throughout the community received training on reforms along with teachers and administrators.

4. **The policies are designed to be long-range and build on experience**. High school graduation requirements, for example, were aligned with new state university admission requirements. All students take three to four years of a college-prep curriculum.

5. **Teacher preparation is aligned with the reforms**. The teacher preparation program at the University of Texas/El Paso is aligned to the school district's standards and other reforms.

6. **The Collaborative collects and shares essential data with all schools**. It has held training in almost all of the 170 schools in the Collaborative on how to use achievement data for school improvement. Data are clear and understandable to parents.

7. **The state accountability system supports local reform**. The Collaborative uses the state's accountability system, which requires schools to show academic progress for all sub-groups of students, to push schools to be responsible for improving every child's learning.

8. **The Collaborative encourages schools to create a sense of family with their parents**. Parents are involved in studying standards and student work and in identifying what good teaching looks like. In many schools, it is providing parent liaisons who focus on literacy development.

Eight years after it was launched, the three districts in the Collaborative had evidence that community involvement works. Before it was formed, the passing rate of black and Hispanic students on TAAS in math was 35%, compared to 83% for white students. By 1998, 84% of minority students passed the TAAS math portion, compared to 93% of white students. The enrollment of ninth graders in Algebra I has increased from 60% to 93%, and the 60% passing rate now exceeds the 1993 rate. Also, in 1992 the districts had 15 low-performing schools on TAAS; by school year 1999-2000, they had none — but also had 74 "exemplary" schools among them.

Source: Presentation by Susana Navarro to the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, 1999.

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Navarro, Susana. Presentation for the Cross City Campaign for Urban School Reform, 1999.

Olson, Laurie and Carol Dowell. *The Schools We Need Now: How Parents, Families and Communities Can Change Schools*. San Francisco, CA: California Tomorrow, 1997. Available in English and Spanish at californiatomorrow.org/publications/.

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CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Developing Family/School Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts. The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) has identified general guidelines for policies and program elements that support the development of successful family/school partnerships. Available at www.ncpie.org/ncpieguidelines.html.

Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches, An Idea Book. A publication that was produced by Policy Studies Associates and the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students. It describes approaches that have been effective at overcoming barriers to family involvement. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/index.html.

Holding Schools Accountable Toolkit: A Guide for People Working in Neighborhoods. Developed by Public Impact under a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this toolkit provides guidance in organizing stakeholders, gathering information, developing action plans, and evaluating progress. Available at www.publicimpact.com/hsat.

Investing in Partnerships for Student Success: A Basic Tool for Community Stakeholders to Guide Educational Partnership, Development and Management. Prepared by Susan Otterbourg for the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, this tool provides basic guidance to planning, developing, implementing and managing partnerships in education. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/investpartner/.

Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed this tool to help schools assess the effectiveness and meaningfulness of their outreach to students, families, and community members. Available at www.ncrel.org/csri/nine/six.htm.

School and Family Involvement Surveys. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory has identified and listed surveys that can help assess how effective school programs are at involving parents and developing relationships with families. This website also provides some guidance in determining whether a survey is appropriate for your school community. Available at www.ncrel.org/cscd/sfi/index.html.

When Everyone is Involved: Parents and Communities in School Reform in **Framing Effective Practice: Topics and Issues in Educating English Language Learners**. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education provides information about the barriers to school involvement faced by language-minority parents and communities. This publication also discusses how to support involvement and provides a framework for an effective model. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/tasynthesis/framing/index.htm.

5 Ways to Assure Quality Teaching
Chapter 4

- Make sure each school has an equitable distribution of competent teachers.
- Select and support principals who know how to establish a collaborative, instructionally focused school environment.
- Give schools the autonomy and support to create professional learning environments for teachers.
- Provide schools with high-quality expertise as part of consistent, intensive professional development.
- Hold teachers responsible for student achievement schoolwide.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Nothing affects the achievement of low-income and/or minority children as much as the quality of the teaching they receive. No curriculum package, test, governance rearrangement, regulation, or special program can equal the impact of a good teacher, one with the knowledge, skills, and commitment to foster student success.

Linda Darling-Hammond and Deborah Loewenberg Ball identified key research on the importance of quality teaching. One study, by economist Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University, analyzed large-scale data sets and found, after controlling for the socio-economic status of students, that the gap between black and white student achievement was explained almost entirely by differences in their teachers' qualifications. Factors in teacher expertise included their education, licensing exam scores, and experience. Overall, teacher expertise accounted for more variation in student achievement than any other factor (about 40% of the total). Every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers, according to Ferguson, netted greater increases in student achievement than other, non-instructional uses of school resources.

A research team led by William Sanders conducted a longitudinal study in Tennessee of teacher effectiveness, based on student scores on state assessments, and found that elementary school students taught by ineffective teachers three years in a row score significantly lower than students taught by highly effective teachers. In fact, three years in a row with poor teaching almost wiped out a student's chances of keeping up in school.

What does good teaching look like? A five-year study of classrooms by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools at the University of Wisconsin/Madison identified three characteristics of "intellectual work" in the classrooms: students constructed new knowledge based on what they previously knew through organizing, synthesizing, explaining or evaluating information (not repeating what they already knew); students engaged in disciplined inquiry, gaining in-depth understanding of problems and using elaborated communication to express their ideas and findings (not superficial studies that require only short answers); and students knew how to use their knowledge outside of the school environment, performances that have a value beyond school (not just through quizzes or final exams).

All students, according to the principal researchers, Fred Newmann and Gary Wehlage, "are capable of engaging in these forms of cognitive work when the work is adapted to students' levels of development." In order to provide this kind of instruction, which the researchers term "authentic instruction," teachers need to meet four standards: they engage students in higher order thinking, they can address central ideas thoroughly in order to help students acquire deep knowledge, they foster substantive conversation among students, and they connect student learning to the world beyond the classroom.

Another study by Michael Knapp, *Academic Challenge for the Children of Poverty*, focused on elementary schools serving low-income children and came to much the same conclusions. Contrary to the belief that instruction for children from poverty backgrounds must be limited to "the basics," this study found that non-traditional instruction worked just as well, or even better. Such instruction was defined as emphasizing meaning and understanding, embedding skills in context, and connecting subjects studied to life outside of the school. Dividing the students into three achievement-level groups, the researchers found that alternative practices worked as well for low achievers as for high ones. On average, "low-performing children increase their grasp of advanced skills at least as much as their high-achieving counterparts when both experience instruction aimed at meaning and understanding. And for both groups, this approach to instruction produces results superior to those of conventional practices."

The problem for high-poverty and/or high-minority schools, however, is that they are least likely to have teachers who can teach an "authentic" pedagogy. In Tennessee, for example, black students are more likely to be assigned to the least effective teachers and far less likely to be assigned to the most effective ones. This pattern is repeated nationally. California's reduced-class-size initiative created significant teacher shortages, and it was in urban areas such as Los Angeles where the largest percentages of teachers hired to fulfill the lower class size initiative were non-certified (statewide, 20% of teachers in high-poverty elementary schools were not fully credentialed, compared to 4% in low-poverty schools). Parents in Oakland, for example, organized by the local ACORN group, researched the backgrounds of teachers and found that schools in the "flats," or the lowest income areas of the city, received the bulk of uncertified teachers hired by the district. In New York

State, only one of 33 teachers is uncertified; in New York City, the figure is one of every seven teachers.

Similarly, studies by Jeannie Oakes show that in schools with the highest minority enrollments students have less than a 50% chance of being taught by science or math teachers with a license and a degree in the field they teach. According to an analysis by Hamilton Lankford of the State University of New York/Albany, one in three teachers hired in the 1990s by New York City failed the main licensure exams at least once. Outside of the city, fewer than one in 20 did so. This information was used in *Thinking K-16*, a publication of The Education Trust, which also critiques teacher licensure exams for their mediocrity, pointing out that most are set about the level of grade 9 to 10.

Union seniority rules often block administrative plans to shift teaching resources to low-income schools. This is one reason why district might want to "reconstitute" a school, a move that allows the school leadership to select the faculty. John Norton described a different approach taken by schools in Long Beach, California. Focusing on one middle school experiencing low achievement and high teacher turnover, the district assigned expert coaches in the four core subjects to work four days a week at the school — mentoring teachers, modeling instruction, and helping to select and use resources. The strategy proved so useful that the use of coaches has spread throughout the district as a means of delivering professional development on site. Optimally, however, district hiring, evaluation, and support policies work to ensure that every classroom is staffed by a competent teacher.

Critical to building staff expertise is leadership by the principal. Principals who stay in one school can build, over time, the capacity of the staff to set and carry through high academic expectations for students. Equally important is a principal's skill at creating a sense of community with a purpose within the school. The Chicago Annenberg Research Project, gathering survey data from 349 of the 489 elementary schools in the district and observations/interviews in 14 schools, found school leadership to be essential for shaping a school's ability to foster student learning. While the capacity of schools in the Chicago system to produce higher student scores has improved overall, the trends among schools involved in the Annenberg Project showed slightly higher progress — and school leadership was a factor critical to affecting school practice and, thus, student learning. Teachers rated leadership high if the principal supported shared decisionmaking and broad involvement (including parents). They also rated leadership high if the principal was very involved in instructional improvement.

DISTRICT 2'S SENSIBLE FORMULA

One of the most extensively researched school districts in the country, New York City's Community District 2, has moved from near the bottom in terms of student scores to the city's second highest community district (the highest district has no Title I schools). With 60% low-income students, the district nevertheless averages fewer than 12% of its students in the lowest quartile of nationally standardized reading tests, compared to 40-50% in most urban districts. Harvard University researcher Richard Elmore has studied District 2 over time, noting that it has followed several specific strategies for 10 years.

- Long-term focus on core instruction, first in literacy and then in math.
- Heavy investments in professional development in the fundamentals of strong classroom instruction both for teachers and principals.
- Strong and explicit accountability for principals and teachers for the quality of practice and the level of student performance, backed by direct oversight of classroom practice by principals and district personnel.
- The expectation that adults will take responsibility for their own, their colleagues', and their students' learning.

Principals are the linchpins of instructional improvement in District 2, according to Elmore. They are "recruited, evaluated, and retained or dismissed on the basis of their ability to understand, model, and develop instructional practice among teachers and, ultimately, on their ability to improve student performance." Furthermore, the district views isolation as anathema to improvement. So, says Elmore, "most management and professional development activities are specifically designed to connect teachers, principals, professional developers, and district administrators with one another and with outside experts in regard to specific problems of practice."

Source: "The Challenge of School Variability: Improving Instruction in New York City's District 2," *CPRE Policy Bulletin*.

The factors that produce good teaching–beyond the competence of teachers and of principal leadership — certainly are interrelated and centered on the culture of the school. According to the research by Newmann and Wehlage, schools need a clear, shared purpose for student learning; collaborative activity to achieve the purpose; and collective responsibility among teachers and students. Certain structural conditions within schools can create such a professional community:

- **Shared governance** that increases teachers' influence over school policy and practice.
- **Interdependent work structures**, such as teaching teams that encourage collaboration.
- **Staff development** that enhances technical skills consistent with school missions for high-quality learning.
- **Deregulation** that provides autonomy for schools to pursue a vision of high intellectual standards.
- **Small school size**, which increases opportunities for communication and trust.
- **Parent involvement** in a broad range of school affairs.

Professional development for teachers should be school-based, preferably embedded in instructional efforts through collaborative analysis of student work. This is contrary to most traditional professional development, such as courses leading to certificates or degrees but unrelated to the specific needs of the school, quick-fix workshops that do not offer consistent feedback, or professional development offered by external trainers to help teachers adopt specific programs. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future recommends that teachers "develop professional discourse around problems of practice" as a central component of professional development. What is needed, the Commission says, is replacing the isolation of teaching with "forums in which teaching and learning can be discussed and analyzed, and where serious examination of practice, its outcomes, and its alternatives is possible."

Studying mathematics reform in California, David Cohen and Heather Hill found that it is important to align professional development with curriculum. Curriculum workshops in California, in which teachers studied new units for math, used them, and shared results with each other over time, created opportunities for teachers to discuss content as well as pedagogy and curriculum. Their students performed much higher on the state assessment in use at the time than those of teachers who participated in more generic professional development, such as sessions on learning styles or cooperative learning. ◆

NO LANGUAGE BARRIERS

Teamwork and professional development allowed teachers at Baldwin Elementary School in Boston, Mass., to help their students overcome language barriers and become among the highest achieving students in the district. With 80% of the students identified as low-income and 72% as language-minority (mostly Chinese), teachers felt overwhelmed and unsure of their teaching strategies.

A new principal fostered collaboration among the teachers, who decided their priority needed to be more background in English-as-a-second-language instruction. The teachers obtained a grant from the district focused on ESL training and materials. The school also adopted a two-hour literacy block for newly immigrated students and a balanced literacy program — with professional development — for all students.

The school's Stanford 9 reading scores increased substantially between 1996 and 2000. In the latter year, all but 4% of third graders and 9% of fifth graders passed the reading test. Moreover, 60% of the third graders scores at the proficient or advanced levels.

Source: School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools. First Annual Report, January 2001.

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CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Assessing the Quality of Teaching and Learning: A Policy Inventory for States/Districts. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF) has developed a diagnostic tool to help examine policies on teaching, such as preparation, recruitment, induction, and professional development. Based on NCTAF's five major recommendation areas, the tool presents questions and suggests data sources for gathering information about your state or school district. Available at www.tc.columbia.edu/nctaf/resourcestates/policy_inventory1.htm (states) or www.tc.columbia.edu/nctaf/resourcedistrict/policy_inventory1.htm (districts).

Ensuring English Language Learners' Success: Balancing Teacher Quantity with Quality in **Framing Effective Practice: Topics and Issues in Educating English Language Learners**. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education discusses professional development and teacher training standards for teachers of English language learners. It also discusses professional development for all teachers. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/tasynthesis/framing/index.htm.

High Quality Professional Development. This booklet from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory discusses professional development, guiding principles and some questions to consider when making choices. Available at www.nwrel.org/request/june98/article1.html.

Implementing IDEA: A Guide for Principals. This guide from the IDEA Partnerships Project discusses implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in accordance with standards and guidelines developed by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Available at www.ideapractices.org/implement.pdf.

Learning From the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. A step-by-step planner from the North Central Regional Education Laboratory to help design and implement professional development plans. This tool also includes a facilitator's presentation guide for introducing or educating others using the Learning From the Best toolkit. Available at www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit.htm.

Professional Development Portfolio (PDP). A tool developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE). Teachers can use the PDP to demonstrate accountability and increase their awareness of effective instructional strategies and principles. Schools and districts can use the PDP as a template to guide professional development and evaluation. Available at www.crede.ucsc.edu/Portfolio/ProfDevel/tableofcontents.html.

Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and Why Are They Important? This briefing paper from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory discusses professional learning communities, their attributes, and outcomes. Available at www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.html.

Questions Parents Can Ask About Teaching Quality. Based on a Parents for Public Schools (www.parents4publicschools.com) toolkit, the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future has posted a list of specific questions parents can use in dialogues about the quality of teaching in their district. Available at www.tc.columbia.edu/nctaf/parents/questions.htm.

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4 Essentials for Setting and Supporting High Standards

Chapter 5

- Align curriculum, instruction, and assessment to high standards for all.
- Use data to drive needed changes in instruction.
- Direct resources, including time, to meeting the standards.
- Create small learning environments.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Schools serving high numbers of poor and/or racial minorities cannot make improvements based merely on what they "feel" is the right thing to do. They need standards as benchmarks. They need good data to determine where they are and to monitor students' progress on meeting the standards. They need to align all their efforts to the standards, including the curriculum, instruction, assessments, and professional development. And they can do all of these things better if they create small learning environments for students and redirect their resources to attaining higher student achievement.

Much of the research on school reform stresses the need to work on improving all facets of schooling at the same time. You cannot separate the curriculum from assessment or from helping teachers learn how to teach at higher levels. But first, there must be standards for content, or what students should know and be able to do. And then there must be standards for performance, or how well students can demonstrate the knowledge and skills they are supposed to be learning. These are the basis of current reforms in education.

Every state now has some form of content and performance standards. Standards-based education especially addresses stereotypical low expectations for poor and/or minority children. Low-income students of color were too often expected to be able to learn less and master fewer skills, and therefore not given the benefit of high standards, expectations, and curriculum fostering higher-order thinking. Because students in programs funded by Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) are to be assessed on and expected to meet the same standards as other students, their schools, for the most part, have much work to do. States are holding the schools accountable for improving student achievement, often rewarding those that do better than expected. Schools that fail to make progress may receive extra help but eventually may be penalized if there is no improvement.

States often have used standards developed by national expert groups, such as the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics. Usually, teachers and administrators and often parents and business leaders are asked to help develop or review state standards. Also, local districts and individual schools can develop their own standards as long as they support state standards, which are the basis for state assessments. At the classroom level, teachers must know how to align the curriculum, instructional strategies, and assessments. Why this is important is clear in a study of implementation of math standards in Pittsburgh, according to Diane Briars and Lauren Resnick, in a report for the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing. In those schools that implemented the alignment carefully, backed by good professional development, the gap between white and black students on math achievement closed. In fact, black students in "strong implementation" schools outperformed white students in "weak implementation" schools.

The Pittsburgh district's math program includes content and performance standards based on well-researched efforts such as those of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics and New Standards, a joint project of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy. The latter assessments are benchmarked to world-class standards. The district uses standards-based assessments from the New Standards program, instruction linked to the standards, and ongoing professional development for teachers on teaching to the standards. Not only did students enrolled in schools that implemented the systemic reforms competently do better on basic skills on the New Standards exams, they also performed better on a standardized norm-referenced test used by the district for many years (Iowa Test of Basic Skills). A strong implementation school used the new curriculum, assessments, and professional development for at least two years. Despite the results of alignment to high standards and good professional development, district officials did not hold all principals and teachers accountable for implementing the program. Thus, students in many schools in the district did not have a chance to learn the content, even though their peers had shown they were capable of performing well with more challenging content and instruction.

The skills of gathering and analyzing data seldom are taught to anyone involved in education except researchers, but schools are now required to gather more and different types of data. How the data are reported gives local parents, teachers, and administrators new tools for measuring the effectiveness of education. Improvements in information obtained by state officials on individual schools, and often on each student, as well as advances in technology, make data

analysis feasible at the school level. Remember that parents of students in Title I programs have the right to participate in and monitor planning for school improvement, which in today's context means approving how schools will meet standards.

In a presentation for Title I schools, equity consultant Phyllis McClure recommended that test score data received by schools be disaggregated in multiple ways, including by: race, gender, and limited English proficiency; disability; free and reduced-lunch eligibility; classroom/teacher; attendance (full year); and Title I status. Results of assessments in specific subjects also can look at whether students have learned discrete skills. In English/language arts, for example, the data could be studied to see if students are proficient at identifying the main idea, spelling, punctuation, or solving problems. State proficiency standards are reported as percentiles, based on comparisons with other students, in order to give schools benchmarks. In many instances, such as in Kentucky, state accountability measures calculate for individual schools how much improvement they need to make in order to have satisfactory progress. Remember that Title I requires schools to make adequate yearly progress in meeting the state's standards; each state has defined what that means, such as reducing the number of students scoring below basic by 10% a year.

Analyzing the data as McClure suggests helps schools to decide where to target changes and resources. The answers might be: use staff more effectively, restructure the schedule, redesign the curriculum, provide or make more effective joint planning time, emphasize student writing skills, regroup students, improve professional development, find better teaching strategies, take actions to avoid the fade-out effect (early-grades improvements that do not last), extend the learning time, or improve student motivation. Setting targets for continuous improvement would include picking baseline data, setting goals for students in each subject at each grade level (using state accountability goals), and deciding on a timeline to reach the goals.

Writing in the *Journal of Staff Development*, data consultant Victoria Bernhardt goes beyond using only student scores, such as standardized test results, grade point averages, and standard assessments. Schools also need to collect perception data (what students, parents, teachers and others think about the learning environment); demographic data (enrollment, attendance, ethnicity, gender, or language proficiency); and school process data (defining programs, instructional strategies, and classroom practices). For example, are such practices and student achievement aligned with the standards?

Data analysis, according to Bernhardt, can go much deeper when it combines different measures. For example, do students who attend school every day get better grades (demographics and student learning)? Or, do students enrolled in interactive math programs perform better on standardized achievements tests than those who took traditional math courses (student learning and school processes)? Which program this year is making the biggest difference in achievement for the lowest-performing students (school processes, student learning, and demographics)?

While collecting data on classroom practices is complex, solid research exists on what instruction should look like, especially in low-income schools. Cited frequently are Newmann's and Wehlage's findings for the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools that describe an "authentic pedagogy" which creates higher levels of achievement, especially in low-income or high-minority schools. The standards for an authentic pedagogy include:

- **Higher-order thinking**. Students manipulate information and ideas by synthesizing, generalizing, explaining or arriving at conclusions that produce new meaning and understandings for them (the opposite of lecturing, worksheets, and textbook-dependent teaching). Studies of Title I confirm this finding. They show that low-performing students respond better to more challenging work, but that teachers in Title I schools tend to rely on traditional forms of teaching and lower-level resources.

- **Deep knowledge**. Instruction addresses central ideas of a topic thoroughly enough to help students explore connections and relationships and arrive eventually at a more complex understanding.

- **Substantive conversation**. Students engage in extended conversations with the teacher or their peers about the subject matter in a way that builds an improved and shared understanding of ideas or topics.

- **Connections to the world beyond the classroom.** Students make connections between the knowledge they are acquiring and either public problems or personal experiences.

Using such standards and comparing classroom practice to them, along with student performance data, can help teachers and students improve, according to the National Research Council's report, *Testing, Teaching, and Learning*. The Council's report uses a study of instruction in Chicago schools to illustrate what such data analysis can show. The study included observations in 800 language arts and math classrooms, as well as information from more than 2,000 teachers. It found that many Chicago classrooms, especially those enrolling students from the most disadvantaged neighborhoods, do not keep pace with grade-level expectations and test content. Although instruction in early grades followed the expectations of the test (Iowa Test of Basic Skills), "the pacing flattens out by about fourth grade...and classes tend to repeat topics already taught. And the repeated lessons do not build on prior learning; rather, the lessons tend to repeat the same basic skills students were exposed to before."

The National Research Council report includes many examples of how districts and schools use data. In New York City's Community District 2, the district administers a citywide mathematics and reading test, and a state test as well. Each year, "the district reviews the results, school by school, with principals and the board, setting specific goals for raising performance, especially among the lowest-performing students."

Boston also uses more than one test to measure school progress. One elementary school in the district begins the school year by assessing every student, from early childhood to grade 5, using a variety of methods: observing young children (through grade 2); running records, which are teacher-administered individual assessments; writing samples. The school repeats the running records and writing samples every four to six weeks. It examines the data in January and again in June to determine the children's progress. In that way, every teacher can tell you how her students are doing at any point. Teachers can adjust their instructional practices accordingly, and principals have a clear picture of how each classroom is performing. The district and state tests, meanwhile, provide an estimate of each school's performance for policymakers.

HOW DATA SHOULD BE USED

The National Research Council recommends that:

- Schools and districts should monitor the conditions of instruction — the curriculum and instructional practices of teachers — to determine if students are exposed to teaching that would enable them to achieve the standards they are expected to meet.
- Schools and districts should use information on the conditions of instruction to require and support improvement of instruction and learning in every classroom.
- Teachers should use the information on conditions of instruction in their classroom, along with data on student performance, to improve the quality of instruction. Districts have a responsibility to assist schools in collecting and using such information.
- Schools should use the information on the conditions of instruction to demand support from the district and to organize the time and resources provided to teachers.
- Districts should use the information on the conditions of instruction to improve the quality and effectiveness of the resources and support they provide to schools for instructional improvement.

Source: Testing, Teaching, and Learning: A Guide for States and School Districts.

Focused resources are increasingly viewed as an important element of successful reform. Aware of the lack of progress of students in pull-out programs, Title I of the ESEA encourages schools with significant numbers of low-income students to reorganize time and staff and implement schoolwide programs. Time and the allocation of teaching staff are perhaps the most important malleable resources within schools, even though traditionally they have been the most rigid. School improvement and professional development plans, required for schoolwide Title I schools, offer opportunities to look at the use of time and staff in order to support greater student learning and teacher collaboration around student achievement.

The Consortium for Policy Research in Education studied a group of schools that chose certain reform strategies — smaller class sizes; research-proven methods to boost student achievement such as tutors and instructional facilitators; and intensive professional development. The schools relied primarily on Title I dollars, English-as-a-second-language funds, and funding for students with disabilities to focus efforts on classroom instruction rather than separate programs. The use of teacher aides, another strategy that research shows makes no or a limited contribution to improved student performance, was discontinued in favor of reducing class size or hiring tutors.

The schools used data to determine where to focus resources, invested in instructional facilitators to help push reforms, reassigned special education teachers to regular classrooms in order to reduce class sizes and include students with special needs, and sought grants to supplement the school budget. Rather than pulling students out for special services, the good elementary schools in this study integrated special teaching expertise on the teams and created shared planning time for teams by using student clubs, arts/physical education classes, or local recreation services for students. Some also "banked" extra time for staff by extending the school day for a few minutes and restructuring teachers' time so that they could be free for a half-day of school reform efforts.

Small is better for low-income and minority students, whether it is schools or classes. The prevailing wisdom since the end of World War II that big is better because of greater efficiency and more offerings to students has taken its toll on students generally and especially on those students who need the schools to give them personal support. Research on the effect of smaller schools is just now emerging as a policy-making tool, but it is unequivocal so far in endorsing smaller learning environments for low-income and/or minority children.

The Rural School and Community Trust sponsored research on the effects of smaller schools in less affluent communities in four states — Georgia, Montana, Ohio, and Texas. The study found that as schools become larger, the negative effect of poverty on student achievement increases. The well-documented correlation between poverty and low achievement is much stronger — as much as ten times stronger — in the larger schools than in smaller ones in all four states. This impressive result was found consistently in 48 of 49 comparisons between smaller and larger schools. Small schools cut poverty's power over achievement by 10 to 56 percentage points, depending on state, grade level, and subject area tested. In some instances, poverty's power over achievement in smaller schools approached zero.

Not surprisingly, the Rural School and Community Trust report recommends that the less affluent the community, the smaller its schools should be. At least one-fourth of the schools serving moderate- to low-income communities in Texas, one-third in Georgia, and two-fifths in Ohio are too large to achieve top performance from their student body; many of them would likely produce higher scores if they were smaller. In Montana, a state that has consistently sustained a small school structure, there is startling evidence that smaller schools and districts outperform larger ones, even though they serve poorer communities.

ORGANIZING FOR SUCCESS

Studying several high-performing high schools in the New York City area and the literature on restructured elementary schools, Linda Darling-Hammond found at least three organizational principles similar to those found in high-performance businesses.

In these schools, the traditional division between planners and doers, left over from the Industrial Revolution, was minimized or eliminated. Nearly everyone in these schools teaches and plans. Most resources go to core classroom teaching rather than to non-teaching functions or to services provided out of the regular classroom. This reduces class sizes and allows more shared time for teachers.

Second, staff are organized in teams responsible for the same group of students. Instead of layers of authority in a typical bureaucracy, teachers directly communicate with each other; specialists are part of the team.

Third, students and teachers spend more time focusing on fewer subjects — classes may extend to as many as 120 minutes rather than the traditional 40-50 minutes. This reduces the student load for teachers, giving them more time for professional learning and to help students individually.

Source: The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work

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Smaller schools seemed particularly beneficial at the middle grades level, where students begin to think about dropping out of school. Moreover, while children of all races are as likely to be affected by the relationship between school size, poverty, and achievement, minority children often are enrolled in schools that are too big to achieve top performance, as much as 2.5 to 3 times the rate of minority enrollment in schools that are smaller.

Similar findings were made by the Consortium on Chicago School Research, which found that the 56 Chicago schools with fewer than 350 students (out of 475 total schools) generally showed greater gains in reading and math achievement than larger schools. This holds true even when controlling for student and school composition effects, including racial composition, concentration of poverty among students, and the percentage of low-income students in the school. The study emphasizes the point that being small is not sufficient. It is what smallness allows teachers and administrators to do differently that in turn can foster higher achievement. Communication and coordination among teachers become easier, thus promoting greater program coherence, building trust among adults who work together, and supporting a professional community within the schools.

The same benefits for low-income and/or minority children are found in smaller class sizes, according to an analysis of data from a class-size study in Tennessee by David Grissmer's research team at the RAND Corporation. Tennessee's Project STAR (Student/Teacher Achievement Ratio) begun as a controlled experiment in 1986, using random assignment of kindergartners and teachers to examine the effects through the third grade in order to compare class sizes of 15, 25, and 25 with an aide. The project is still tracking the students. Results indicate that classes of 13 to 17 students can make a difference in student achievement that lasts over time, even until high school graduation.

The beneficial effects of smaller classes were especially strong for low-income and/or minority children. Students assigned to small classes in the primary grades were more likely to graduate in the top quarter of their class and apply to college. They were also less likely to drop out of school. The average scores of black students on standardized tests increased from 7 to 10 percentage points; the scores for whites in smaller classes increased only 3 to 4 points. Black students who started out in the smaller classes were 10% more likely to take the SAT or ACT college entrance exams, compared to an increase of less than 2% for white students in smaller classes.

A parallel finding was made by Educational Testing Service researcher Harold Wenglinsky in an examination of fourth and eighth grade class sizes and student scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress. Students in classes of fewer than 20 students fared better on the assessment. This was especially true in inner-city schools, leading Wenglinsky to conclude that the most efficient use of resources to improve student achievement would be to create smaller class sizes for low-income/minority children in the early grades. ◆

MAKING TIME FOR LEARNING

Gladys Noon Spellman Elementary School in Prince Georges County, MD, is a racially mixed school with high poverty levels. In 1994, only 17% of third graders performed at or above the satisfactory level on the Maryland State Performance Assessment Program. Teachers were concerned about severe overcrowding that resulted in classes of 40 students and constant interruptions when they were teaching. The principal and teachers devised some solutions.

All teachers, including specialists, guidance staff, and music and physical education teachers, now work in pairs during a 90-minute block of time for reading and language arts. Each teacher takes one-half of the class at a time, creating smaller learning groups, with one teacher providing direct instruction while the other teacher reinforces language skills. No interruptions are allowed.

Teacher collaboration improved, and they have pulled together to focus on student learning. By 1999, 73% of the third graders performed at or above the satisfactory level on the MSPAP reading test.

Source: School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools, First Annual Report, January 2001.

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CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

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Designing a Sustainable Standards-Based Assessment System. This publication focuses on the organizational elements of a school system, such as purpose, principles, policies. It describes a process of examining and clarifying these elements in ways to support and sustain a standards-based assessment system. Available at www.mcrel.org/products/standards/designing.asp.

Every Single Student: A PEER Resource Manual on Standards-Based Education and Students with Disabilities. From the PEER (Parents Engaged in Education Reform) project, a special project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, this publication covers a broad range of topics relevant to standards-based education and students with special needs. Available at www.fcsn.org/peer/ess/esshome.html.

Implementing Schoolwide Programs: An Idea Book on Planning. A guidebook from the U.S. Department of Education. It focuses on methods and useful resources for planning and measuring the effectiveness of schoolwide programs. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/index.html.

The ToolBelt: A Collection of Data-Driven Decision-Making Tools for Educators. This site from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory provides a range of information-gathering tools and designed to help educators collect data about their classroom, school, district, professional practice, or community need. Available at www.ncrel.org/toolbelt/index.html.

A Toolkit Using Data for Decision-Making to Improve Schools: Raise Student Achievement by Incorporating Data Analysis in School Planning. The New England Comprehensive Assistance Center developed this guidebook for collecting, understanding, and using data to improve school programs designed to raise student achievement. The toolkit provides resources that help create and revise school action plans, from assembling baseline data to monitoring ongoing progress. Available at www.edc.org/NECAC/resources/pubs/toolkit.html.

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6 Ways to Tell If Your School is Serious About Teaching Reading and Math
Chapter 6

- It emphasizes pre-reading skills in preschool and kindergarten programs.
- It insists that teachers are knowledgeable about the most current research on early literacy and mathematics learning and use that knowledge in their classrooms.
- Its teachers know to use the dexterity of language-minority children with their own language in building their skills in English.
- It creates a school environment immersed in literacy and committed to student learning of math concepts as well as basic skills, which is consistent from grade to grade.
- Students having difficulty learning to read are diagnosed early and given appropriate, high-quality interventions, immediately.
- It provides extra learning time to avoid making students repeat a grade.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Learning to read is not just one of the goals of schooling. It is essential if students are to succeed in any grade, in any subject. According to the National Reading Panel, only about 5% of children learn to read effortlessly. About 60% find early reading difficult, and of that number, 20-30% really struggle. By fourth grade, the seriousness of the problem for these children becomes obvious. While the record is not good for students on a national average (44% of fourth graders are below basic reading levels), among minority students, poor reading skills are scandalous. The National Assessment of Educational Progress reports that 71% of black fourth graders and 81% of Hispanic fourth graders are below-basic in reading.

The source of the problem is not too little or too much of a particular approach to teaching reading, controversies that created the "reading wars" over phonics. Rather, it is a combination of many factors — and the absence of a balanced, research-based literacy program for youngsters learning to read. For example, longitudinal studies by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD), which are discussed in the National Reading Panel's report, *Teaching Children to Read*, emphasize that young children must be able to distinguish sounds (phoneme awareness) even before they can link them to printed forms of speech (phonics).

Young children with limited exposure to oral or print language at home before entering school "are at risk for reading failure," according to G. Reid Lyon, head of NICHD, because they have not had enough practice in listening to sounds and associating them with the alphabetic principle. That is why plentiful home language and literacy experiences before a child enters school are crucial and why the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement, a consortium of research-based universities, lists them in *Effective Schools/Accomplished Teachers* as priority principles for learning to read. Furthermore, the Center says, parents must understand that once their children are in school, they need to continue to model reading habits at home. The Center recommends nine other research-based principles to assure that young children learn to read:

- **Pre-reading skills emphasis in preschools.** Children's experiences should include opportunities to listen to and examine books, say nursery rhymes, write messages, and see and talk about print.
- **Classroom language and meaningful reading and writing events in kindergarten and grade 1 that promote skills for later reading success.** Such activities can be motivating and playful for young children, including oral renditions of rhymes, poems, and songs, as well as writing their own journals and messages.
- **Primary-level instruction that is consistent, well-designed, and focused.** Instructional activities that promote growth in word recognition and comprehension include repeated reading of text, guided reading and writing, reading and writing strategy lessons, reading aloud with feedback, and conversations about texts children have read.
- **Primary-level classroom environments that provide opportunities for students to apply what they have learned in teacher-guided instruction to everyday reading and writing.** Teachers read books aloud and hold follow-up discussions, children read independently every day, and children write stories and keep journals. These events are monitored frequently by teachers, ensuring that time is well spent and that children receive feedback on their efforts.
- **Recognition that cultural and linguistic diversity affect children's attitude toward and knowledge about topics, language, and literacy.** Effective instruction includes assessment, integration, and extension of relevant background knowledge and the use of texts that recognize children's diverse backgrounds. The language of the children's home is especially critical for schools to build on when children are learning to speak, listen to, write, and read English. There is considerable evidence that the linguistic and orthographic knowledge students acquire in speaking and reading their first language predicts and transfers to learning to read a second language. When teachers capitalize on the advantages of bilingualism or biliteracy, second language reading acquisition comes much more easily.
- **Children identified as having reading disabilities receive systematic instruction but not at the cost of opportunities to engage in meaningful reading and writing** (in contrast to Title I pull-out programs that stress only drills in basics). These children benefit from the same sort of well-balanced instructional programs that benefit all children who are learning to read and write.

- **Proficiency in reading, acquired by the third grade.** Reading proficiency is sustained by deep and wide opportunities to read; the acquisition of new knowledge and vocabulary; an emphasis on different kinds of texts (e.g., stories versus essays); and explicit help for students to reason about texts.

- **Professional development focused on improving students' reading achievement.** These opportunities allow teachers and administrators to analyze instruction, assessment and achievement, to set goals for improvement, to learn about effective practices, and to participate in ongoing communities in which teachers deliberately try to understand both students' successes and persistent problems.

The final point emphasizes shared responsibility throughout a school for making sure all children read well. In successful schools, goals for reading achievement are clearly stated, high expectations for children's attainment of these goals are shared by all in the school, instructional means for attaining these goals are articulated, and shared assessments are used to monitor children's progress. In addition to fostering an environment in which young students are constantly reading and writing, the successful school is ready with interventions when necessary. One study cited by the Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement says that one-fourth of poor/minority children gain little from whole-class instruction in phonological awareness. They do not learn to distinguish sounds and therefore cannot begin to learn to read. All of the research evidence indicates interventions with such children must provide them with intensive small group or tutorial support (rather than whole-class interventions) such as the small-group, ability-grouped tutoring in the program Success for All or the daily individual one-on-one tutoring in the program called Reading Recovery. Teachers responsible for conducting such interventions must receive special training and integrate their work with regular classroom teachers.

As with reading, becoming proficient in mathematics is complex, according to the National Research Council. Most of the attention in schools is on learning basic computational skills, but researchers say that becoming good at math involves several processes. Students should have a conceptual understanding of math (not just basic skills); be able to do procedures well; approach math strategically so they can formulate, represent, and solve math problems; be able to explain what they are doing; and see math as sensible and useful.

This means that teachers must select demanding tasks, plan lessons that will elaborate on what students are to learn, and have high expectations for their students in math. According to a policy statement from the Learning First Alliance, the K-9 curriculum needs to be restructured so that there is a coherent transition from elementary school math to higher-level coursework. Unfortunately, studies that compare the curriculum in the United States with that of countries where students perform much better show that our schools spend too much time on low-level skills and do not spiral instruction up, building knowledge and expanding students' capacities to understand concepts. This would require introducing geometric and algebraic concepts much earlier in the curriculum, not solving the problem by offering alge-

CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Equity Checklists in Mathematics and Science. The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse has made available several checklists and rubrics to help schools and communities identify equity issues in the teaching of mathematics and science. Available at www.enc.org/topics/equity/selfassessment/.

Every Child Reading: An Action Plan. The Learning First Alliance has developed a guide for supporting literacy with tips for parents, teachers and schools. Available at www.learningfirst.org/publications.html.

Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do. This report from the American Federation of Teachers describes the essential knowledge teachers should have in order to be successful at teaching all children to master reading. Recommendations for improving the teaching of reading are made regarding teacher education and professional development. Available at www.aft.org/edissues/rocketscience.htm.

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bra in the eighth grade. All students should be able to do sophisticated math by the time they leave the middle grades. Among the recommendations of the Learning First Alliance that apply to schools:

- **Have clear benchmarks** for each grade or group of grades and create grade-by-grade curriculum guides consistent with state standards.
- **Create a closer link between professional development for teachers and research** on the teaching and learning of math.
- **Enforce licensing requirements** so that students are taught by teachers qualified in math.
- **Discuss the math curriculum and standards** with parents, community leaders, and the media. ❖

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5 Steps to Using Assessment as an Effective Tool for Accountability
Chapter 7

- Make sure administrators and teachers understand that different assessments are needed for different purposes.
- Align classroom assessments to the curriculum and embed them in classroom instruction.
- Use a variety of assessments, and never use a single test to make crucial (high-stakes) decisions about individual students.
- Use assessments to monitor the quality of instruction, especially by analyzing student work.
- Include all but the most severely disabled in regular testing programs and use disaggregated data from testing to make needed improvements

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Individual schools and their parents may believe they are at the mercy of assessment policies not of their making as a result of state and/or district accountability mandates. These often dictate the use and consequences of test scores. High-poverty schools often also are the lowest performing and the primary target of punitive measures included in the accountability systems. At the base of these policies is the belief of policymakers, communities, and parents that schools must be held accountable for student performance. State assessments are the tool to do that. There is much more, however, to the issue of assessments regarding low-performing schools.

Under the federal Title I statute, states must determine "adequate yearly progress" by schools in meeting standards adopted by the state and, as of the school year 2000-01, have in place policies to deal with schools that do not make such progress. Delay by states in establishing such policies often resulted in hasty adoption of standards and assessments that have not been well thought out or aligned with each other. On the other hand, schools can use the public data available from such assessment systems to identify their weaknesses and strengths.

The problem in low-performing high-poverty schools, however, is that scores on state tests become so critical to the school's future — and often determine rewards/sanctions and even whether teachers/principals will hold their jobs — that teachers (and principals) spend an inordinate amount of time on test-taking skills and "teaching to the test." According to Gary Orfield and Johanna Wald of the Harvard University Civil Rights Project, "test preparation is far more likely to dominate teaching in high-poverty schools than in affluent ones.... Also, high-poverty schools hire a large number of uncertified and inexperienced teachers who tend to focus exclusively on test preparation...."

State assessments are only one assessment tool available to schools. When teachers align their own classroom-embedded performance assessments to state/district standards, they are addressing state tests without sacrificing the curriculum and time spent on it to low-level learning. States should use criterion-referenced assessments aligned to their content standards, enabling schools to align their curriculum and own assessment initiatives in order to help their students learn the content presumably reflected in state standards. The standards, of course, must be worth teaching to — rigorous without being ridiculous. Performance standards then indicate the level of performance students should demonstrate (usually expressed by such terms as basic, proficient, or advanced).

Testing, like teaching and standards, is intended to help students. If the test is worth teaching to, then "teaching to the test" is not detrimental. Judith Langer of the National Research Center on English Learning and Achievement found a real difference in attitudes and approaches to testing in high-performing and in low-performing schools. In higher-performing schools, district-level coordinators often created working groups of teachers who collaboratively studied the demands of tests their students were taking and used their test item analyses to rethink the curriculum. In low-performing schools, on the other hand, teachers often inserted test-practice assignments into the curriculum as additions rather than integrating curriculum and assessment. How to take a test, rather than how to gain and use the skills and knowledge tested, seemed to be the focus.

High-poverty schools now operate in a standards-based environment because of the requirements under Title I. The Committee on Title I Testing and Assessment of the National Research Council issued an assessment guide in 1999 based on research and best practices that lead to improved student performance. Teacher quality and the quality of professional development available to high-poverty schools determine skilled use of assessments, the Committee concluded. Its other recommendations included:

- **Standards for student performance should be at the heart of an education improvement system.** They set the expectations for student learning and signal that all students, regardless of background or where they happen to attend school, are expected to demonstrate high levels of knowledge and skill. They focus everyone's attention on results schools are expected to achieve rather than the resources or effort put into the system.

- **Content standards, which spell out what students should know and be able to do in core subjects, should be clear and rigorous.** Performance standards should include performance categories (e.g., basic, proficient, advanced), performance descriptions, exemplars of performance in each category, and rules that help educators determine if students have reached each category.

- **Assessments in standards-based systems should serve a number of purposes, and no single instrument can serve all purposes well.** Assessment should involve a range of strategies relevant to individual students, classrooms, schools, districts, and states.

- **Most of the assessments used "should detect the effects of high-quality teaching."** Assessment should allow teachers to use the results to revise their practices in order to help students improve.

- **Districts need to measure the performance of young children.** Although 49% of children served by Title I are in grades 3 and below, the 1994 Title I statute does not require states to establish assessments before grade 3. Yet assessments are necessary for these students if teachers and the public are to know what progress is being made in developing necessary skills, such as reading. The range of assessments for these ages is becoming broader and more sophisticated. Teachers should monitor the progress of children in grades K-3 at multiple points in time, using direct assessments, portfolios, checklists, and other work-sampling devices. Districts should use sampling, rather than individual student scores, to gauge accountability in grades 1 and 2.

- **Schools should have clear guidelines for including students with disabilities and English language learners in assessment systems, including the extent and type of accommodations for the students.** The National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing recommends that all students, except those with the most severe disabilities, be included in testing programs, else a school will not truly be accountable for educating all students, nor can comparisons be made among schools.

- **Assessment results should be reported so that they indicate how students perform related to standards.** They should be disaggregated to show which groups of students are in the greatest need of instructional improvements.

- **Schools need to link assessment and instruction, strongly and explicitly.** One way to do this is to use analyses of student work as a means of helping teachers understand the quality of assignments.

The Committee's assessment guide indicated that schools often rely on outside experts or well-prepared facilitators to guide collaborative teacher and principal discussions within schools about student work. The quality performance reviews conducted in California schools every three years require collection and analyses of student work in a core subject area several times during a school year; the student work also is reviewed by a team of visiting colleagues.

Some schools have used exams developed by the New Standards project, a joint project of the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy, and are based on demanding content and performance standards. Schools using New Standards exams often focus their professional development on student work. In some schools in such urban districts as San Diego and Long Beach in California and Louisville, Kentucky, students in the upper grades help establish the standards for performance (rubrics) or at least know before a unit begins what they need to do to attain certain levels, such as "proficient" or "advanced."

According to *Figuring It Out*, a report on standards-based reform in urban middle schools; teachers report that such strategies are effective with students. Because "there are no secrets" to the expectations, students know what is required to make an "A," for example, and become more engaged in their work. ◆

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CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Going Schoolwide, Comprehensive School Reform Inclusive of Limited English Proficient Students: A Resource Guide. From the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education Resource Collection, this guide provides resources for planning, implementing and evaluating schoolwide reform efforts within schools. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/.

Holding Schools Accountable Toolkit: A Guide for People Working in Neighborhoods. Developed by Public Impact under a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this toolkit provides guidance in organizing stakeholders, gathering information, developing action plans, and evaluating progress. Available at www.publicimpact.com/hsat.

Making Assessment Accommodations: A Toolkit for Educators. Developed by the ASPIRE and ILIAD IDEA Partnership for the U.S. Department of Education, this toolkit provides information and training resources about accommodations in state and district assessments. This resource includes videos, guides for principals and staff developers, and a pamphlet in English and Spanish for families. Available for order at www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog2/assessment.html.

Quality School Portfolio. Quality School Portfolio is a software product developed by the Center for Research in Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at UCLA. It helps schools disaggregate data and report school information and also provides a set of research tools such as surveys, questionnaires and observation protocols for gathering data relating to school climate and instructional practices. Available at qsp.cse.ucla.edu.

ToolKit98 (and ToolKit98 Addendum 2000). Developed by the Network of Regional Educational Laboratories, this guide is designed to help classroom teachers improve the way they assess student learning. Available at www.nwrel.org/assessment/toolkit98.asp.

The Use of Tests as Part of High-Stakes Decision-Making for Students: A Resource Guide for Educators and Policy-Makers. This resource, developed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, provides information regarding test measurement standards, legal principles, and resources to assist educators and policymakers understand ways to use standardized tests that are educationally sound and legally appropriate. Available at www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/testing/download.html.

7 Steps to Assure Equity and Inclusion
Chapter 8

- Oppose both retention and social promotion; the goal must be to ensure all students are meeting, at the minimum, grade-level standards, no matter what it takes.
- Use data and disaggregate data to monitor policies and practices in order to determine their fairness, inclusion, and focus on moving all students to high levels of learning.
- Use the diversity of students, their families and neighborhoods/communities to make the curriculum relevant to students.
- Adopt fair discipline policies that focus on prevention and apply them consistently.
- Include all but the most seriously disabled or new English language learners in assessment systems, use accommodations for disabled and language-minority students, if needed.
- Include all but the most seriously disabled students in regular classrooms, provide regular teachers with in-class support and professional development, and develop individualized instruction that helps all students meet standards.
- For language-minority students, provide an instructionally rich curriculum, whether in the home language or the home language in combination with other strategies.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

A first step to assuring equity is for principals, teachers, and parents to know the law. States are currently required under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to report disaggregated scores on state assessments to schools. All students are to be included in the assessments (or adaptations of assessments that are as rigorous for disabled or language-minority students); the only exceptions are students enrolled in the school district for less than a year. Schools also need to look at data other than test scores to be sure they are offering equal opportunities to all students. These would include disciplinary actions by race/ethnicity/gender, enrollment in honors/enrichment programs, access to well-qualified teachers, adequate resources for all classrooms, and student/parent satisfaction (using survey data).

The political push to "put an end to social promotion" has resulted in policies that primarily stigmatize poor and/or minority children. According to Lorrie Shepard of the University of Colorado, almost all studies of retention (54 out of 60 total) show that repeating a grade either harms achievement or does not improve it in the years following the repeated grade itself. Furthermore, once a student has been retained twice, there is a 90% probability that the student will drop out of school. Most retentions occur in kindergarten or grades 1 and 2. Shepard also points out that retention costs on the average $5,500 per child: "The single most important thing that can be done [to prevent retention] is to teach students to read well in the early grades and to stick with the effort instead of waiting to do something when they enter fourth grade."

The alternative to retention or social promotion is to get it right the first time. Schools often provide low-performing students with extra learning time, including: longer blocks of time devoted to reading, writing, or math; before- and after-school programs; Saturday schools; and individualized intervention programs. Many urban districts use summer school as a means of maintaining skills and study habits, although educators and parents need to be careful that summer

STARTING BEHIND, STAYING BEHIND

Ronald Ferguson's chronology of how achievement gaps emerge and evolve from kindergarten through high school includes:

1. **Children start kindergarten at different levels.** Children of different racial, ethnic, and social class backgrounds arrive at kindergarten with different types and levels of preparation for school, and this produces achievement gaps starting in kindergarten. The patterns are standard enough that teachers learn to expect them. Although there are many exceptions, black and Latino children tend to rank behind white and Asian children. Within racial or ethnic groups, children whose parents are better educated tend to do better. These gaps by race, ethnicity and social class exist within as well as among schools.

2. **Teachers and parents have limited repertoires to address gaps.** Facing these gaps, teachers and parents alike have limited repertoires to use in helping the less well-prepared children to catch up and may even do things to make the gap worse. The problem of limited repertoires may be most severe for teachers who are not well versed in children's home cultures and languages and who may, therefore, be at greater risk for misjudging children developmentally and teaching them inappropriately.

3. **Children become aware of gaps and internalize stereotypes.** As they grow older, children become more aware that achievement differences correlate with group characteristics, and they tend to accept stereotypical assumptions and assertions about the sources and implications of such differences. They may project these stereotypes onto themselves.

4. **Adults' expectations reinforce children's internalization of stereotypes.** Adults may reinforce children's self-perceptions and feelings of superiority or inferiority, especially if teachers seem to favor high achievers.

5. **Children who are labeled as low achievers are taught ineffectively.** Grouping and tracking practices are less important to this story than the quality and appropriateness of instruction. No matter whether they are segregated in homogeneous groups of low achievers or mixed in heterogeneous groups among high achievers, low achievers are often taught ineffectively. The best evidence suggests that ability grouping makes no difference if the curriculum for different

programs are not limited to just helping students pass tests. Another strategy, year-round schools, now practiced by more than 3,000 schools nationally, usually provides three-week breaks, during which many schools hold "intercession" classes for students needing extra help.

Successful high-poverty schools leave no student behind. A critical element is creation of an environment where school leaders and teachers share a collective sense of responsibility for the progress of every student. According to the Dana Center study of nine successful urban elementary schools, school leaders constantly challenged teachers and students to higher levels of academic attainment, using data "to identify, acknowledge, and celebrate strengths and to focus attention and resources on areas of need." A seminal aspect of school reform in Texas, for example, is the disaggregation of data to show scores of all sub-groups of students (e.g., by ethnicity) and a mandate to make progress with all sub-groups.

The parameters of the achievement gap problem — and some possible areas for data gathering — are suggested in an analysis presented by Ronald Ferguson of Harvard University to the Minority Student Achievement Network in June 2000. Addressing its focus — to close the achievement gap between minority and non-minority students in the network's 15 district members — Ferguson noted that research, experience, and common sense identify many causes for the achievement gaps. These include differences between communication and interaction processes among families and communities and those of the school environment.

According to a Cross City Campaign report, a research action project in Tucson, the Educational and Community Change Project, demonstrated that when teachers become aware of the strength of culture in their students and their students' families, their perception of students' potentials changed considerably. Developed by Paul Heckman of the University of Arizona and community organizers, the project

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groups is the same. Conversely, if curriculum and instruction are tailored to fit children's current proficiencies, they learn more. Tailoring can be done effectively under a variety of grouping arrangements.

6. **Low achieving children become less engaged in academics and more engaged in other pursuits.** Children who do poorly even when they work hard may become less preoccupied with scholastic goals and seek other domains in which to excel, such as athletics and social skills. They may accept peer norms that reinforce this inclination to de-emphasize schoolwork.

7. **Children lose confidence and develop anxiety that interferes with their academic performance.** Even children who have confidence in their own abilities may experience "stereotype threat" because they expect others to expect less of them; "stereotype anxiety" can interfere with their performance, especially on high-stakes exams.

8. **Children do not work consistently enough to move to higher achievement levels.** Children who are performing below their potential and who lack confidence, or who have confidence but are ambivalent because they identify with lower-performing groups, may go through cycles of fleeting resolve–working hard at times, but not consistently enough to shift to higher achievement levels and remain there.

9. **Public leaders do not share commitment to the idea that minority children can excel.** With the possible exception of leaders in the current school standards movement, there has been no shared commitment among public leaders to the idea that black and Latino children have more potential than their current achievements demonstrate and that schools have a responsibility to cultivate that potential.

10. **Resources alone do not explain the achievement gap.** There are some places in the country where material resources in schools are grossly inadequate. In these places, material deprivation surely contributes to achievement gaps. By and large, however, current inequality in school-level resources and expenditures appears to be at best a minor explanation for contemporary achievement gaps.

Source: Presentation to the Minority Student Achievement Network Annual Conference, Arlington, VA, 2000.

worked inside schools to help teachers become aware of the community knowledge their students brought with them — and outside of the schools to build parent and community power. Teachers spent a three-hour block of time each week, guided by a coordinator, talking together about the knowledge their students were bringing to the classroom. Students, teachers, and parents engaged in a community improvement project together. Gradually, teachers began to change their curriculum and instruction. Language tracking was eliminated as bilingual and monolingual teachers teamed up, ending the isolation of language-minority students. Teachers organized cross-age grouping and became less dependent on textbooks and more on culturally relevant resources. They used what students "wonder about" as the entry to a rich curriculum. Student achievement scores, which had been near the bottom, rose to the district average.

An important indicator of the commitment of a school to full participation by every child in the academic and social culture of the school is the school's record in discipline. Over-zealous approaches to promoting safety in schools, according to a joint report on school discipline from the Advancement Project and Harvard University's Civil Rights Project, fall unevenly on minority children, who are more likely than non-minorities to be disciplined, suspended, or expelled for similar offenses. In *Opportunities Suspended*, the Civil Rights Project summarized a literature review by Milwaukee Catalyst and Designs for Change on effective discipline policies in urban schools. Best practices include:

- **Effective school leadership**. There is a comprehensive and proactive plan for school discipline; a fair, clear code of conduct is consistently enforced; policies address root causes of discipline problems; suspension is used as the last resort; school council and staff take part in analyzing and improving discipline; and teachers are evaluated on effective discipline practices.

- **A school environment that supports learning.** Every student is a valued member of the school community; the community develops proactive discipline strategies; school staff take responsibility for school-wide discipline; a quality in-school suspension program provides academic help; extracurricular activities build ties between students and school; the school is structured around small units; self-discipline is taught in the classroom; root causes of student truancy and tardiness are addressed; and most students with discipline problems are kept in the mainstream program.

- **Effective adult learning and collaboration**. Workshops focus on proactive discipline methods, training provides a clear analysis of the root causes of discipline problems, there is regular follow-up in the form of concrete planning and teacher support, and all adults participate in professional development workshops.

- **Family and community partnerships**. Families, students, and community help identify problems and solutions; all discipline information is clearly communicated to families and students; community agencies assist students and families with discipline problems; families are notified and enlisted as partners when children are suspended; and the school contacts parents to recognize children's *positive* behavior.

- **Quality instructional program**. Teachers view students' social/emotional development as part of their job; engaging learning activities are used to minimize student misbehavior; teachers communicate clear expectations for student behavior; teachers maintain classroom discipline without disrupting the learning process; teachers model proper behavior by treating all students with respect; and suspended students get help from teachers to make up missed work.

Undoubtedly, some students in high-poverty schools exhibit consistently troublesome behavior, causing schools to have high rates of disciplinary actions. If the child has disabilities and is enrolled in special education programs, however, schools must respond in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in determining whether disciplinary action is appropriate. Research findings, federal legislation, and a natural evolution of efforts to reach all students have led to what is known as "inclusive schools." Whether disabled or language-minority, students in high-poverty, high-achieving schools feel that they belong to a welcoming community ("family" was a major characteristic of high-performing, high-poverty schools in the study of Texas high-performing, high-poverty schools).

High-poverty, high-success schools with large enrollments of language-minority children make decisions about the academic program for their students based on individual needs. A National

WHAT AN INCLUSIVE SCHOOL LOOKS LIKE

Drawing from lessons provided by a Council for Exceptional Children study of 12 schools with an inclusive philosophy, the Working Forum on Inclusive Schools listed "a sense of community" as the first priority for the schools. Other characteristics of inclusive schools were:

- Leadership that involves all of the school's staff in planning and carrying out successful strategies.
- High standards that give all children opportunities to meet them, although instruction is delivered according to each student's needs.
- Collaboration and cooperation that fosters arrangements for students and staff to support one another.
- Changing roles and responsibilities so that teachers are more like coaches and less like lecturers; support staff work closely with teachers in the classroom, and every person in the building supports higher learning.
- An array of services that are coordinated with the teaching staff.
- Partnership with parents.
- Flexible learning environments that allow for individualized instruction but do not rely exclusively on pull-out programs.
- Strategies based on research about how people — students and teachers — learn best.
- New forms of accountability relying less on standardized tests and more on authentic assessments that tell how each student is progressing.
- Access that makes all programs and facilities available to all students.
- Continuing professional development.

Source: *Creating Schools for All Our Students: What 12 Schools Have To Say, Working Forum on Inclusive Schools.*

Research Council report did not endorse any approach to English-language learning over another. Rather, it advised that each school implement the strategy best suited for its students, albeit insisting that every strategy promote higher-order content and expectations for students. A school in a largely Latino neighborhood where children have few opportunities to hear English might select a different approach from a school where the neighborhood is more ethnically and linguistically diverse.

The research regarding English language learning does provide several guidelines for schools. According to a project led by Yolanda Padrón and Hersholt Waxman of the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence (CREDE), all students benefit from strong cognitive and academic instruction conducted in their first language, especially if the instruction in their first language is on grade level academically. English language learners who develop academically and cognitively using their first language are more successful in English-based instruction by the end of their schooling than those English language learners who are not provided with first-language instruction. These effects presume that the students receive grade-level academic instruction in English for part of the school day and throughout the school year. CREDE also says such instruction must be provided from four to seven years for students to be on a par with native speakers of English. No matter what label is given to the program for English language learners, all effective programs share three crucial features, according to the CREDE research: understanding students' language knowledge and needs, planning and delivering instruction that meets those needs, and assessing whether students comprehended the instruction.

Even the best programs require three to four years to close the gap, according to George Mason University researchers Virginia Collier and Wayne Thomas. The most expensive and least effective strategy for English language learners is to pull them out of regular classes for English instructio The most effective strategy gives students access to higher content in all core subjects and takes advantage of knowledge about their cognitive development. Enrichment models endorsed by the researchers include both one-way bilingual instruction, where students spend a half day in each language; and two-way bilingual programs, where native English speakers participate in the same classes along with native speakers of another language, and all students learn

in both languages (peer coaching is one of the most effective techniques for learning a language). ❖

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CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Holding Schools Accountable Toolkit: A Guide for People Working in Neighborhoods. Developed by Public Impact under a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this toolkit provides guidance in organizing stakeholders, gathering information, developing action plans, and evaluating progress. Available at www.publicimpact.com/hsat.

Professional Development for All Personnel in Inclusive Schools. From the Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices, this policy brief extends the Consortium's framework for state and local policies regarding inclusion. It discusses professional development practices that support inclusive schools. Available at www.asri.edu/cfsp/brochure/prodevib.htm.

Public Deliberation: A Tool for Connecting School Reform and Diversity. This guide was developed in conjunction with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's Diversity in Dialogue project. It describes how public deliberation can be used to bring schools and communities of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds together to focus on school reform. Available in English and Spanish at www.sedl.org/pubs/lc06/welcome.html.

Quality School Portfolio. Quality School Portfolio is a software product developed by the Center for Research in Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at UCLA. It helps schools disaggregate data and report school information and also provides a set of research tools such as surveys, questionnaires and observation protocols for gathering data relating to school climate and instructional practices. Available at qsp.cse.ucla.edu.

ToolKit98 (and ToolKit98 Addendum 2000). Developed by the Network of Regional Educational Laboratories, this guide is designed to help classroom teachers improve the way they assess student learning. Available at www.nwrel.org/assessment/toolkit98.asp.

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4 Ways to Make Reforms Stick
Chapter 9

- Make sure policies, missions, and efforts are aligned within and across grade-levels.
- Set goals, monitor them, and make corrections.
- Publicize progress.
- Be forward-looking and use counseling and planning models that look beyond the K-12 education system.

THE RESEARCH SAYS:

Studies of school reform point to the importance of alignment, including policies regarding accountability, the curriculum and resources to teach it, professional development and assessment. More important than adopting a specific reform program or initiative, it is long-term, consistent emphasis on student achievement — with the necessary support — that makes efforts to improve achievement more than fleeting and faddish. Schools need stable, thoughtful leadership at the school and district level. Districts should be willing to adjust resources to provide equity, as should state policy. According to the RAND study of effective policies to improve achievement, based on National Assessment of Educational Progress data, certain state policies — and presumably also those at the district level — are cost-effective. The most efficient uses of resources, it says, are to provide all K-8 teachers with more adequate resources for teaching, expand public pre-kindergarten in low socio-economic status states, and target reductions in pupil-teacher ratios in lower grades in those states to well below the national average.

Schools struggling to improve need strong, comprehensive support at the district level. Gerald Anderson, former superintendent for Brazosport, Texas, Independent School District, discussed how, over an eight-year period, the school district used data analysis to focus practice and professional development on continuous improvement. The result was that the lowest-performing schools eventually surpassed higher-achieving schools on state tests. In 1991-1992, half of the schools in the district scored low on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS). A process used by one elementary teacher to raise achievement resulted in such significant improvement that the process was adopted first by the entire school for a year, then by all schools in the district. Within five years, the Brazosport district became the largest in the state to reach "exemplary" status in the state's accountability rating.

The emphasis on long-term, intensive strategies is reinforced by another U.S. Department of Education study, *Academic Challenge for the Children of Poverty*. Instruction emphasizing high-level skills engages poor children better in academic learning and is as effective as, if not more effective than, teaching only basic skills. The key is having teachers with the skills and knowledge to teach this way. However, with few exceptions, the study notes, "what teachers taught and how they taught it were influ-

THE BRAZOSPORT STORY

All classrooms in the Brazosport district now use this eight-step, data-based instructional process:

1. **Disaggregation of test scores**. TAAS scores are separated by sub-groups of students each spring to identify which ones require help. Data are analyzed for all teachers over the summer and given to them at the beginning of the school year.
2. **Development of instructional timeline**. Using Texas' definition of essential learnings, teachers develop a timeline for teaching each of the skill areas. Time allocations are based on the needs of sub-groups of students and the importance of the objectives.
3. **Delivery of instructional focus**. The district gives each teacher an instructional focus sheet with the objective, target areas, instructional dates, and assessment dates; teachers determine how they will meet them.
4. **Assessment**. After the instructional focus has been taught, teachers give an assessment of it. 80% of students must master an objective before teachers can move on. Shorter, more frequent assessments allow teachers to detect and correct problems early. Instructional specialists help teachers when needed.
5. **Tutorials**. Students who fail an assessment attend small tutorial groups that reteach the area. Teachers at all grade levels and certification serve as tutors during and after school and on Saturdays, supplemented by computer labs.
6. **Enrichment**. During tutorial time, students who have mastered the material attend enrichment classes; at the secondary level, students must master basics before taking electives.
7. **Maintenance**. Supplementary materials for students help them retain what they have learned; these add a lot of structure and reinforcement for low-performing students.
8. **Monitoring**. Principals visit classes daily during the instructional focus time to monitor progress.

Source: Presentation to the Council of Chief State School Officers 10th National Working Conference, Long Beach, CA, April 2000.

enced considerably by conditions and policies from outside the classroom. In schools, instructional leadership, curricular policies, and the management of external mandates affected teachers' approach to instruction. Districts exerted strong pressures on academic instruction through curriculum guidelines, textbook adoption choices, and testing." These pressures acted as a major stimulus to or constraint on teachers' use of instruction that emphasized meaning and understanding (rather than strictly basic skills).

How can parents, administrators and even teachers themselves recognize this kind of teaching? The study notes that teachers most engaged in such practices with low-income children were likely to have orderly classrooms in which various types of activities and interactions among students and teachers were encouraged. They also were likely to find ways of connecting instruction to students' home lives.

Describing restructured schools that have created "democratic learning communities" that are succeeding in very diverse communities, Linda Darling-Hammond provides another set of standards to look for. These schools organize teachers' and students' work together so as to get beyond bureaucracy and produce: active in-depth learning, emphasis on authentic performance, attention to child and youth development, appreciation for diversity, opportunities for collaborative learning, a collective perspective across the school, structures for caring, support for democratic learning, and connections to family and community.

Another strategy in many communities is the formation of K-16 collaborative organizations that bring educators at all levels, civic leaders, and the business community together to work on school reform. The El Paso Collaborative is one example. The Long Beach, California, collaborative is a K-18 arrangement, incorporating graduate education of teachers into the overall scope of the organization.

School report cards, now mandated by many states, can include measures of progress on practices such as those outlined by Darling-Hammond, expanding beyond the usual test scores and data on such indicators as absenteeism and budgets. Communication and involvement with parents, such as in El Paso, can create learning communities for students, teachers, and parents that are capable of monitoring their progress with every child. To do that, however, teachers, administrators, and parents need to be able "to know it when they see it," which has been the purpose of this guidebook. ❖

CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

The Education Trust and K-16 Councils. The Education Trust has helped develop a national network of K-16 councils at the local and state levels. K-16 councils bring together school, college, business and community leaders to support the academic achievement of all children at all levels. Additional information available at www.edtrust.org.

Holding Schools Accountable Toolkit: A Guide for People Working in Neighborhoods. Developed by Public Impact under a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this toolkit provides guidance in organizing stakeholders, gathering information, developing action plans, and evaluating progress. Available at www.publicimpact.com/hsat.

Quality School Portfolio. Quality School Portfolio is a software product developed by the Center for Research in Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at UCLA. It helps schools disaggregate data and report school information and also provides a set of research tools such as surveys, questionnaires and observation protocols for gathering data relating to school climate and instructional practices. Available at qsp.cse.ucla.edu.

Strategic Communications in the Digital Age. The Benton Foundation maintains a web-based toolkit that provides access to tools and resources for developing and implementing an effective communications strategy. Available at www.benton.org/Practice/Toolkit/.

ToolKit98 (and ToolKit98 Addendum 2000). Developed by the Network of Regional Educational Laboratories, this guide is designed to help classroom teachers improve the way they assess student learning. Available at www.nwrel.org/assessment/toolkit98.asp.

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WHAT PARENTS SHOULD ASK ABOUT STANDARDS

The Center for Law and Education suggests that parents check schools for visible and other signs that students are working to meet standards (e.g., standards with student work are posted, teachers discuss standards with each other and with parents). Teachers should be able to answer such questions as:

- Is my child's work at or above the standards for her age?
- Are most students in the class above (or below) the standards?
- What do the standards say they should be learning?
- What guidelines do you use for grading?
- Does my child understand what she must do to meet the standards?

Source: *For Parents, Urgent Message.*

The assumption has been that students who persist in failure are students who cannot learn. Conversely, the education that we more and more require for fulfilling lives and a peaceful and productive society demands that children learn to understand concepts as well as facts, in classrooms where they link and apply ideas, produce their own work, and learn to cooperate productively with diverse peers. This requires in turn that teachers take account of children's abilities and needs in order to engage them in active in-depth learning and create a classroom setting that stimulates in-depth understanding; that the results be inspected by demonstrations of authentic performance; and that learning problems be met with thoughtful analysis and fresh approaches to helping individual children succeed. The assumption here is that all children can learn. The need is for teaching strategies and school organizations that make that possible.

Linda Darling-Hammond
The Right to Learn: A Blueprint for Creating Schools That Work

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Appendix A: Tools and Resources

The U.S. Department of Education's Technical Assistance Network. Maintained by the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, the Technical Assistance Network is an integrated system of national and regional service providers of technical assistance and information designed to help states, school districts and schools to improve teaching and learning for all children. NCBE has developed the **Technical Assistance Network Directory**, which is a compilation of contact and profile information on state and federally sponsored technical assistance providers, including the "Starting Points" listed below, organized by state/territory. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/tan/index.htm.

STARTING POINTS

Comprehensive Centers provide technical assistance services focused on the implementation of reform programs, prioritizing services for Title I schoolwide programs and other high-poverty schools and districts. Comprehensive Center Network consists of fifteen centers serving different regions throughout the country. Information available from ccnetwork@wested.org or at www.ccnetwork.org.

Equity Assistance Centers provide technical assistance to promote educational equity in the areas of race, gender and national origin. There are ten Equity Assistance Centers serving different regions of the country. Information available at www.equitycenters.org.

Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) Clearinghouses provide ready access to an extensive body of education-related research literature. The sixteen subject-specific ERIC Clearinghouses collect, abstract and index education materials for the ERIC database, respond to requests for information in their areas of expertise, and develop special publications on current research, programs and practices. Information available at www.eric.ed.gov.

Federal Resource Center for Special Education (FRC) supports a technical assistance network that responds to the needs of students with disabilities, with a special focus on students from underrepresented populations. The six Regional Resource Centers for Special Education (RRCs) assist state education agencies in their region improve programs, practices and policies affecting students with disabilities. Information available at www.dssc.org/frc/index.htm.

National Educational Research & Development Centers address nationally significant problems and issues in education and help strengthen learning for all students. Examples of research areas include adult literacy, at-risk students, diversity, reading, standards and testing. Information available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/tan/rdcenters.htm.

Parent Information and Resource Centers (PIRCs) help families, communities and schools collaborate to support children's learning, with the objective of initiating and expanding opportunities for parents to be involved with their children's learning. Each PIRC serves the state or region within the state in which is it located and is required to identify and serve areas with high concentrations of low-income, minority and limited English proficient families. Information available at www.ed.gov/Family/ParentCtrs/index.html or www.ncpie.org/AboutNCPIE/StateParentInformationResourceCenters.html.

Regional Educational Laboratories work to ensure that those involved in school improvement efforts have access to the best available information from research and practice. The ten Regional Educational Laboratories offer region-specific services as well as develop expertise in particular Specialty Areas to provide information and resources to schools and communities throughout the nation. Information available at www.relnetwork.org.

Technical Assistance Alliance for Parent Centers (the Alliance) provides technical assistance for establishing, developing and coordinating Parent Training and Information Projects (PTIs) and Community Parent Resource Centers (CPRCs) under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). These centers provide information and training to parents of and professionals who work with children with disabilities. Information available at www.taalliance.org.

CONNECTING TO TOOLS AND RESOURCES...

Accreditation Readiness Survey. The National Association for the Education of Young Children's survey tool helps early care and education providers familiarize themselves with accreditation criteria and identify areas that need strengthening for developing a program improvement plan. Available at www.naeyc.org/accreditation/support.htm.

Assessing the Quality of Teaching and Learning: A Policy Inventory for States/Districts. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future has developed a diagnostic tool to help examine policies on teaching, such as preparation, recruitment, induction, and professional development. Based on NCTAF's five major recommendation areas, the tool presents questions and suggests data sources for gathering information about your state or school district. Available at www.tc.columbia.edu/nctaf/resourcestates/policy_inventory1.htm (states) or www.tc.columbia.edu/nctaf/resourcedistrict/policy_inventory1.htm (districts).

Building Your Baby's Brain: A Parent's Guide to the First Five Years. This Teaching Strategies guide, listed on the National Institute on Early Childhood Development and Education website, explains some of the findings from brain research and strategies to support development. Available in English and Spanish at www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/ECI/publications.html.

Child Care Checklist for Parents. This resource from Child Care That Works of Iowa State University Extension helps identify information parents might need when looking for child care. Available from the National Network for Child Care website at www.nncc.org/Choose.Quality.Care/qual.care.page.html.

Comprehensive School Reform: Making Good Choices – A Guide for Schools and Districts. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory developed this tool to help schools examine themselves and prepare for schoolwide reform through a set of self-assessment measures. Available at www.ncrel.org/csri/progtool.htm.

Criteria for Quality Standards. Achieve, Inc., describes the criteria it uses in benchmarking academic standards. Each category of criteria is followed by a set of questions that you can consider to examine your state's standards. Achieve's website also contains an extensive, searchable content standards database in the subjects of English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Available at www.achieve.org/achieve/achievestart.nsf/pages/criteria.

Designing a Sustainable Standards-Based Assessment System. This publication focuses on the organizational elements of a school system, such as purpose, principles, policies. It describes a process of examining and clarifying these elements in ways to support and sustain a standards-based assessment system. Available at www.mcrel.org/products/standards/designing.asp.

Developing Family/School Partnerships: Guidelines for Schools and School Districts. The National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education (NCPIE) has identified general guidelines for policies and program elements that support the development of successful family/school partnerships. Available from NCPIE, www.ncpie.org/ncpieguidelines.html.

Developmental Milestones: How I Grow In Your Care. ZERO TO THREE designed three charts for parents and caregivers outlining children's learning processes during their earliest years of life. Available at www.zerotothree.org/parent.html?Load=NAS-report.html.

Ear Infections and Language Development. This booklet from the National Center for Early Development & Learning provides information regarding ear infections and middle ear fluid. It explains how hearing and language learning may be affected by ear infections and how you can support children's language learning. Available at www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PAGES/prdcts.htm.

The Education Trust and K-16 Councils. The Education Trust has helped develop a national network of K-16 councils at local and state levels. K-16 councils bring together school, college, business and community leaders to support the academic achievement of all children at all levels. Additional information available at www.edtrust.org.

An Educators' Guide to Schoolwide Reform. This guide provides a review of the research on 24 schoolwide reform models. For each approach reviewed, the guide provides ratings accompanied by profiles and research references. This work was conducted by the American Institutes for Research (www.air.org) and was contracted by the American Association of School Administrators (www.aasa.org), American Federation of Teachers (www.aft.org), National Association of Elementary School Principals (www.naesp.org), National Association of Secondary School Principals (www.nassp.org), and National Education Association (www.nea.org). Available at www.aasa.org/Reform/index.htm.

Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten: Linking Children, Families, & Schools. This manual describes a school-based approach to enhancing connections during the transition to kindergarten. It presents a framework, key principles, strategies and practices for developing a community transition plan. Available at www.fpg.unc.edu/~ncedl/PAGES/prdcts.htm.

Ensuring English Language Learners' Success: Balancing Teacher Quantity with Quality, in **Framing Effective Practice: Topics and Issues in Educating English Language Learners**. The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education discusses professional development and teacher training standards for teachers of English language learners. It also discusses professional development for all teachers. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/tasynthesis/framing/index.htm.

Equity Checklists in Mathematics and Science. The Eisenhower National Clearinghouse has made available several checklists and rubrics to help schools and communities identify equity issues in the teaching of mathematics and science. Available at www.enc.org/topics/equity/selfassessment/.

Every Child Reading: An Action Plan and **Every Child Mathematically Proficient: an Action Plan**. The Learning First Alliance has developed a guides for supporting literacy and math proficiency, with tips for parents, teachers and schools. Available at www.learningfirst.org/publications.html.

Every Single Student: A PEER Resource Manual on Standards-Based Education and Students with Disabilities. From the PEER (Parents Engaged in Education Reform) project, a special project of the Federation for Children with Special Needs, this publication covers a broad range of topics relevant to standards-based education and students with special needs. Available at www.fcsn.org/peer/ess/esshome.html.

Family Involvement in Children's Education: Successful Local Approaches, An Idea Book. This publication was produced by Policy Studies Associates and the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students. It describes approaches that have been effective at overcoming barriers to family involvement. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/FamInvolve/index.html.

Going Schoolwide, Comprehensive School Reform Inclusive of Limited English Proficient Students: A Resource Guide. From the National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education Resource Collection, this guide provides resources for planning, implementing and evaluating schoolwide reform efforts within schools. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/resource/.

High Quality Professional Development. This booklet from the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory discusses professional development, guiding principles and some questions to consider when making choices. Available at www.nwrel.org/request/june98/article1.html.

Holding Schools Accountable Toolkit: A Guide for People Working in Neighborhoods. Developed by Public Impact under a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, this toolkit provides guidance in organizing stakeholders, gathering information, developing action plans, and evaluating progress. Available at www.publicimpact.com/hsat.

Implementing IDEA: A Guide for Principals. This guide from the IDEA Partnerships Project discusses implementation of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in accordance with standards and guidelines developed by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. Available at www.ideapractices.org/implement.pdf.

Implementing Schoolwide Programs: An Idea Book on Planning. This guidebook from the U.S. Department of Education focuses on methods and useful resources for planning and measuring the effectiveness of schoolwide programs. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/Idea_Planning/index.html.

Investing in Partnerships for Student Success: A Basic Tool for Community Stakeholders to Guide Educational Partnership, Development and Management. Prepared by Susan Otterbourg for the Partnership for Family Involvement in Education, this tool provides basic guidance to planning, developing, implementing and managing partnerships in education. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/investpartner/.

Leadership Audit Tool: A Participatory Management Checklist. This web-based tool, located on the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory website, focuses on using participatory management to foster staff buy-in and commitment and helps school leaders identify skills and techniques they would like to improve. The tool will graph your responses to a questionnaire about leadership areas. Available at www.ncrel.org/cscd/proflead.htm.

Learning From the Best: A Toolkit for Schools and Districts Based on the National Awards Program for Model Professional Development. A step-by-step planner from the North Central Regional Education Laboratory to help design and implement professional development plans. This tool also includes a facilitator's presentation guide for introducing or educating others using the Learning From the Best toolkit. Available at www.ncrel.org/pd/toolkit.htm.

Making Assessment Accommodations: A Toolkit for Educators. Developed by the ASPIRE and ILIAD IDEA Partnership for the U.S. Department of Education, this toolkit provides information and training resources about accommodations in state and district assessments. This resource includes videos, guides for principals and staff developers, and a pamphlet in English and Spanish for families. Available for order at www.cec.sped.org/bk/catalog2/assessment.html.

Measure of School, Family and Community Partnerships. The Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory developed this tool to help schools assess the effectiveness and meaningfulness of their outreach to students, families, and community members. Available at www.ncrel.org/csri/nine/six.htm.

A Parent's Guide to Accessing Programs for Infants, Toddlers, and Preschoolers with Disabilities. The National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities developed this parent's guide for families who are seeking help for their young children with special needs. It provides information regarding early intervention services for children ages birth through 2 years old and special education and related services for children ages 3 through 5 years old. Available at www.nichcy.org/pubs/parent/pa2.htm.

Professional Development for All Personnel in Inclusive Schools. From the Consortium on Inclusive Schooling Practices, this policy brief extends the Consortium's framework for state and local policies regarding inclusion. It discusses professional development practices that support inclusive schools. Available at www.asri.edu/cfsp/brochure/prodevib.htm.

Professional Development Portfolio (PDP). A tool developed by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity & Excellence (CREDE). Teachers can use the PDP to demonstrate accountability and increase their awareness of effective instructional strategies and principles. Schools and districts can use the PDP as a template to guide professional development and evaluation. Available at www.crede.ucsc.edu/Portfolio/ProfDevel/tableofcontents.html.

Professional Learning Communities: What Are They and Why Are They Important? This briefing paper from the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory discusses professional learning communities, their attributes, and outcomes. Available at www.sedl.org/change/issues/issues61.html.

Public Deliberation: A Tool for Connecting School Reform and Diversity. This guide was developed in conjunction with the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory's Diversity in Dialogue project. It describes how public deliberation can be used to bring schools and communities of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds together to focus on school reform. Available in English and Spanish at www.sedl.org/pubs/lc06/welcome.html.

Quality School Portfolio. Quality School Portfolio is a software product developed by the Center for Research in Evaluation, Standards and Student Testing at UCLA. It helps schools disaggregate data and report school information and also provides a set of research tools such as surveys, questionnaires and observation protocols for gathering data relating to school climate and instructional practices. Available at qsp.cse.ucla.edu.

Questions Parents Can Ask About Teaching Quality. Based on a Parents for Public Schools (www.parents4publicschools.com) toolkit, the National Commission on Teaching & America's Future (NCTAF) has posted a list of specific questions parents can use in dialogues about the quality of teaching in their district. Available at www.tc.columbia.edu/nctaf/parents/questions.htm.

School and Family Involvement Surveys. The North Central Regional Educational Laboratory has identified and listed surveys that can help assess how effective school programs are at involving parents and developing relationships with families. This website also provides some guidance in determining whether a survey is appropriate for your school community. Available at www.ncrel.org/cscd/sfi/index.html.

Strategic Communications in the Digital Age. The Benton Foundation maintains a web-based toolkit that provides access to tools and resources for developing and implementing an effective communications strategy. Available at www.benton.org/Practice/Toolkit/.

Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science: What Expert Teachers of Reading Should Know and Be Able To Do. This report from the American Federation of Teachers describes the essential knowledge teachers should have in order to be successful at teaching all children to master reading. Recommendations for improving the teaching of reading are made regarding teacher education and professional development. Available at www.aft.org/edissues/rocketscience.htm.

The ToolBelt: A Collection of Data-Driven Decision-Making Tools for Educators. This site from the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory provides a range of information-gathering tools and designed to help educators collect data about their classroom, school, district, professional practice, or community need. Available at www.ncrel.org/toolbelt/index.html.

A Toolkit Using Data for Decision-Making to Improve Schools: Raise Student Achievement by Incorporating Data Analysis in School Planning. The New England Comprehensive Assistance Center developed this guidebook for collecting, understanding, and using data to improve school programs designed to raise student achievement. The toolkit provides resources that help create and revise school action plans, from assembling baseline data to monitoring ongoing progress. Available at www.edc.org/NECAC/resources/pubs/toolkit.html.

ToolKit98 (and ToolKit98 Addendum 2000). Developed by the Network of Regional Educational Laboratories, this guide is designed to help classroom teachers improve the way they assess student learning. Available at www.nwrel.org/assessment/toolkit98.asp.

Tools for Schools: School Reform Models Supported by the National Institute on the Education of At-Risk Students. The National Institute is a part of the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. This guide describes 27 school reform models, providing information about comprehensive school reform models, classroom and curriculum redesign models, and professional development reform models. Available at www.ed.gov/pubs/ToolsforSchools/index.html.

The Use of Tests as Part of High-Stakes Decision-Making for Students: A Resource Guide for Educators and Policy-Makers. This resource, developed by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, provides information regarding test measurement standards, legal principles, and resources to assist educators and policymakers understand ways to use standardized tests that are educationally sound and legally appropriate. Available at www.ed.gov/offices/OCR/testing/download.html.

What It Takes: 10 Capacities for Initiating and Sustaining School Improvement. From the Northeast and Islands Regional Educational Laboratory, also known as the LAB at Brown University, this guidebook is designed to help schools reflect upon their organizational capacities for developing and maintaining successful reforms. Available at www.lab.brown.edu/public/pubs/pub_index.shtml.

When Everyone is Involved: Parents and Communities in School Reform, in **Framing Effective Practice: Topics and Issues in Educating English Language Learners.** The National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education provides information about the barriers to school involvement faced by language-minority parents and communities. This publication also discusses how to support involvement and provides a framework for an effective model. Available at www.ncbe.gwu.edu/ncbepubs/tasynthesis/framing/index.htm.

Appendix B: Glossary

Ability grouping: The practice of clustering students according to their academic skills so that teachers can instruct an entire group at the same level.

Accountability: State and district policies related to holding districts, schools and/or students responsible for academic performance.

Achievement gap: The disparity in academic performance between students of different racial-ethnic groups and income levels.

Alignment: The process of ensuring that content and performance standards, assessment, instruction, and learning in classrooms are consistent and supportive of each other for maximum effectiveness in reaching standards.

Comprehensive school reform: An approach to school improvement that incorporates every aspect of a school, including the coordination of financial resources, school support, ongoing professional development, parent and community involvement, research-based methods, and evaluation strategies to integrate curriculum, instruction, student assessment, classroom management, technology and effective school functioning. Also referred to as schoolwide reform.

Content standards: Statements about what students should know and be able to do in a given subject by the end of a certain period of time.

Cooperative learning: An approach through which students learn in small, self-instructing groups and share responsibility for their learning.

Criterion-referenced assessment: Assessment that measures how thoroughly a student has acquired specific skills or learned an area of knowledge. Criterion-referenced tests help identify student strengths and weaknesses with regard to specific knowledge or skills that are supposed to be learned through the instructional program. Performance assessments are criterion-referenced.

Democratic learning communities: Communities of students learning together and interacting with the society around them.

Demographics: Information used to describe the make-up of a population; may include data on enrollment, attendance, ethnicity, gender, parental education, family income and structure, and language proficiency.

Direct instruction: A process of teaching that emphasizes systematic sequencing of lessons, a presentation of new content and skills, guided student practice, use of feedback and independent practice by students.

Early childhood education: The education of children from birth through eight years, often seeking to maximize physical, emotional, social, and cognitive development by focusing on school readiness, proper health and nutrition, and adequate placement in developmentally appropriate environments.

English Language Learner (ELL): See Limited English Proficient.

Full service schools: A school design that incorporates home and community supports to foster the full development of students, often integrating education, medical, social and human services for needy students and their families.

Higher order thinking: Understanding complex concepts and the ability to analyze problems when provided with conflicting information. Higher order thinking requires students to manipulate and synthesize information to problem-solve and reach conclusions.

Inclusion: The practice of including students with disabilities in regular classrooms, rather than in separate classrooms or pull-out sessions.

Individuals with Disabilites Education Act (IDEA): The IDEA Amendments of 1997 strengthen academic expectations and accountability for the nation's 5.8 million children with disabilities and bridges the gap that has too often existed between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in a regular curriculum.

Limited English Proficient (LEP): Refers to students for whom English is a second language and for whom grade-level proficiency in reading and writing in English is affected by a lack of adequate English language skills. LEP students are also referred to as English Language Learners (ELL).

New Standards: Through this joint project, the Learning Research and Development Center at the University of Pittsburgh and the National Center on Education and the Economy develop internationally benchmarked academic performance standards in reading, writing, mathematics, and science that identify the level of performance elementary, middle and high school students should demonstrate in their applied learning. The project also develops aligned teaching materials, tests, and portfolios that assess student performance against these standards.

Norm-referenced tests: Assessment that tests a sample of students (the norm) and then compares the scores of other students to the norm outcome to show how an individual student performed or scored on a test compared to that of the student's appropriate peer group. Norm-referenced tests are generally used to sort and rank students by comparing them to a larger group, rather than to measure achievement or performance.

Peer tutoring: The practice of having students who have mastered certain skills or concepts help one or more students at the same grade-level learn those skills or concepts.

Performance/Proficiency standards: Statements about how well students must demonstrate what they know through a variety of assessment tools such as grades, criterion-referenced tests and portfolio assessments. Students, families and teachers should understand how well students must perform according to performance categories, descriptions, exemplars, and rules. Often identifies performance categories such as basic, proficient, and advanced.

Reconstitution: The practice of a state or district acting to take over a school, imposing school closure, or replacing any or all the school staff as a result of low performance on accountability measures.

Remediation: The provision of supplemental services and academic instruction to students who are identified as performing below the basic skills level in the basic subject areas of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Schoolwide reform: See comprehensive school reform.

Small learning environments: Relatively low student-teacher ratio, generally less than twenty to one, which provides teachers with more control and more resources for the students. Teachers typically have more teaching time as well as more one-on-one time.

Social promotion: The practice of promoting students to the next grade along with their peers regardless of their academic progress.

Student mobility: Refers to students who make non-promotional school transfers.

Teacher mobility: Refers to teachers who transfer from one school or district to another.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA): A federal program, formerly known as Chapter 1, that serves compensatory education programs to poor and disadvantaged children in many school districts throughout the U.S.

Two-way (dual) bilingual instruction: A program of instruction within a classroom containing a mix of native English speakers and English language learners from the same language group. Two-way bilingual instruction programs aim to develop proficiency in both languages for both groups of students and enable each group to learn the other's vernacular while also meeting high academic standards. Also known as dual-language instruction or bilingual immersion.

High-Performing Schools:

- Create a safe, orderly environment that allows students to concentrate on academics.
- Have high levels of parent and community involvement.
- Have teachers and administrators who are committed to the philosophy and mission of their schools and who have access to quality professional development that helps them achieve that mission.
- Have the freedom of flexibility in curriculum design, as well as making personnel and finance decisions.
- Maximize time spent on instruction.
- Set high standards for student achievement and plan curriculum and assessment based upon those standards.
- Hold teachers and administrators accountable for meeting school goals.

From the School Improvement Report: Executive Order on Actions for Turning Around Low-Performing Schools, First Annual Report, January 2001.

"Add It Up is a comprehensive, readable guide to proven strategies and policies that help schools succeed with all their students. It is a valuable resource for educators, policymakers, parents and community members who know their young people can meet high standards and want to make sure that they will."

Kati Haycock
Director, The Education Trust

"The national school reform community overflows with optimism that 'reforms du jour' and quick fixes will result in high achievement for every child. Add It Up dismantles that fantasy. Despite many amazing local success stories, the absence of an accepted set of research-proven reform practices and policies has led to fragmented educational systems and a loss of public faith in the ability of leaders to fix low-performing schools. PRRAC has taken an important step in using rigorous research as a means of rebuilding civic confidence in the ability of school and political leaders to set schools on the path toward high achievement for all."

Wendy D. Puriefoy
President, Public Education Network

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